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MIKE SHAYNE



MYSTERY MAGAZINE

NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

MURDER AT DONDO BEACH

by BRETT HALLIDAY

Lush she was, made for men and love. Now she was a naked, beautiful corpse, with her last rendezvous behind her. To Mike Shayne she was more, an open invitation to death in the Miami night, with all the danger signs coming his way.

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MURDER AT DONDO BEACH

Mike Shayne looked at the girl on the bed. So lush, so utterly female—so dead. He shrugged. The same death waited for him out there in the night—unless he could get the killer first.

by Brett Halliday

THE VICTIM did not consider it chic to be murdered. She was a very chic woman of thirty nine years: attractive, healthy, intelligent, mod. Too, she was on the brink of marrying wealth. She had connived long and hard to acquire that wealth and it was especially important that she not die.

She was sleeping flat on her

back and naked in the center of the queen-size bed, breathing softly. But the instant the foreign object was whipped around her exposed neck she struggled upward with the beginning of a scream.

The scream was cut off. Something like a lumpy cord cruelly pinched all sides of her neck in toward her pharynx. For an instant, she thought she

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The new MIKE SHAYNE short novel



was dreaming: she had the wild, crazy thought that she might be a paper bag clenched shut and twisted^o in a large hand. Then the frightening awareness was fully on her. She was being murdered!

Eyes popped, the popping a product of heart-thumping fear, the pinching of her throat muscles—and surprise. She recognized her attacker. She was dumfounded. She had been aware of the existence of viciousness in her assailant, but, for the most part, that viciousness had been an underlying thing, surfacing only occasionally. Now, however, the viciousness was very real—in the gleaming eyes that hovered above her, the twist of face, the determination of the strong hands that applied the murder weapon.

She died with a final shudder rippling the length of her tanned body. Her eyes were bugged, her tongue protruded and was caught in clamped white teeth, the teeth beginning to pink with blood. Clawed hands that had been frantically tearing at the terrible thing that encircled her neck went limp and polished nails glistened in the light. Bare feet that had been digging against sheets and bed covering became immobile, the toes turning up once again. Parted legs suddenly were

relaxed. They were dancer's legs: trim, smooth, lean, not an ounce of extra flesh to be seen.

The killer loosened the twisted bra from the victim's neck, straightened and stared in fascination on the corpse. The killer stood for a long time, perspiring slightly in spite of the air-conditioning.

The bra became a tiny heap on the chartreuse shag carpeting beside the bed, and the killer finally breathed normally again, smiled slightly. It was a smile of satisfaction.

Then a tiny frown appeared on the killer's face. It was not finished, not perfect. The eyelids had to be shut down, the bleeding tongue put out of sight, the lips closed to conceal the sight of the blood, the body straightened, the room arranged...

II

DONDO BEACH, Florida was a new town still under construction and growing fast on the Atlantic sea coast thirty-five miles north of Miami. Michael Shayne and his passenger rolled into Dondo late in the morning of a typical, subtropical Tuesday in early November. Sunshine made the small town glisten.

Shayne's mood didn't match the day. He was anxious to have

this job finished, be rid of the fat Oscar Morrison. Domestic cases were not his meal. He normally avoided them like he avoided cottage cheese. He had taken on Morrison, however, because nobody in his right mind turns down an easy two hundred clams.

The highway had become Dondo's main street and the convertible rolled quietly at the slow pace. Shayne shot Morrison a side glance. "You got any idea where we're heading now?"

"Catch one of these service stations," the fat man said. "I'll use a phone. My ex works for some outfit called Tower Incorporated. Maybe I can get a line on where to find my daughter. Maybe I won't have to talk to the mother face-to-face."

Shayne pulled into a station and got a can of Coke from a machine while Morrison put a dime in the pay phone. Bracing hips against a fender of the convertible, the hulking redhead scowled on the day. Morrison was a client who had appeared out of nowhere in Shayne's Flagler Street office in Miami earlier that Tuesday morning. He had said he had arrived in Miami by jet from Des Moines Monday night.

"Mr. Shayne, I'm afraid of myself," Morrison added from



the client's chair in front of the detective's scarred desk. "I'm not sure how I'm going to react when, and if, I see my ex. I might shake her hand, or I might kill her. That's why I want you along. One day's employment to protect me from myself. How much?"

Morrison was a short man with a hooked nose and a tremendous stomach, a heavy breather, swarthy, thin dark hair combed back, his eyes the color of sharkskin. He looked as if he had the strength to kill. But Morrison was a neat man, too. White shirt, spotless, blue necktie smooth, and his gray suit had been cleaned recently. On the other hand, the suit was shiny with years of wear and

threadworn in a spot or two, and there was a hole in the sole of one of the polished black shoes.

"I looked you up on the Yellow Pages and you had the biggest ad," said Morrison as if attempting to help form a decision.

"I'm also expensive," said Shayne frankly as he massaged the lobe of his left ear with the thumb and forefinger of his right hand. "Two hundred bucks for the rest of today."

He figured the price would send the fat man down the street to find a cheap tracer, but Oscar Morrison, without batting an eyelid, took a flat, aged wallet from an inside coat pocket and extracted two one hundred dollar bills. He put the bills on Shayne's desk.

"I have to see my daughter," he said. "It's been three years since my ex took Debbie from me. Took, that's what I said. I was angry then, I'm angry now. I'm harboring a lot of bitterness. I don't like my ex. If I could avoid seeing her again, I would. But I can't. My daughter is living with her."

"In Dondo Beach?" the redhead asked.

Morrison nodded. "Place called the Golden Sand. I hear from Debbie every so often."

"You harboring any ideas about whisking your daughter

off across country someplace, taking her from her mother?"

Morrison's expression became sour. "I've thought about it, yeah. But my kid is eighteen now. You don't *take* kids who are eighteen. They either go or they don't go, and in my case—"

Morrison let the words dribble off, sat back, sighed, "Hell, Shayne, I don't have much to offer an eighteen-year-old girl. I'm a drifter. I have been all my life. I'll bet I've had seven different sales jobs in the last three years. I've sold everything from diapers to tires. And right now I'm unemployed. I quit the Des Moines tire outfit last Friday. With that two hundred out there, I've got about a hundred and forty little ones left in my billfold. Not that I care. I'll pick up another peddling job. But a kid will give a razz. A kid wants security—and that's the one place I have to give my ex credit. She's always managed to provide security for Debbie."

"So all you really want to do," Shayne pressed, "is see your daughter, talk to her."

Morrison's frown was deep. "I had a letter from Debbie last week. It was the first time I'd heard from her in a month or so. That wasn't like her. She used to write every week, then all of a sudden the letters

dribbled off. "She never said anything was wrong at Dondo Beach but I have a feeling. Shayne, do you ever get a stinking feeling that everything is not right?"

"I get 'em, pal," the detective said, picking up the two bills.

He had left Morrison's money with his pert secretary, Lucy Hamilton, told Lucy to close shop early, and now he stood in the hot sunshine in a service station driveway in Dondo Beach, his nerve ends beginning to snap for action. Patience was not one of his long suits.

The fat man returned to the convertible, his tiny mouth drooping. "My ex didn't show for work today. We have to catch her where she lives. It's on down the street, last place on the beach side."

The Golden Sand looked immaculate and was brilliant in the sunshine, stretched 10 floors toward the blue sky. It faced the Atlantic, a street beside the glistening structure going down a slight rise to a beach. Beyond the beach, the sea rolled gently. Shayne eyed the condominium. Apartments here probably started at three-fifty a month, rent, or a mere fifty thousand to purchase.

The small, polished lobby of the building was empty when

Shayne and Morrison entered. So was a corner desk. Shayne shot a glance at a small wall clock over the desk: five minutes before one o'clock. They entered a self-service elevator, the rangy Shayne towering over the fat man.

Morrison did not seem to need a map. They rode the silent elevator up to the seventh floor, stepped into a corridor of thick, tan carpeting. Morrison hesitated, then stabbed a stubby finger toward a door straight ahead. The door wore a tiny gold identification: 7-B. Shayne knew the apartment would face the ocean.

They moved toward 7-B. Suddenly Shayne stopped, caught Morrison's arm. A scowl furrowed the redhead's brow. Morrison half turned. "What's the matter?"

Shayne nodded toward the door. "Look."

The door was open about eight inches.

"So?" said Morrison.

He took another step. Shayne jerked him back. "Hold it!"

The detective looked around, listened hard, his cragged face taut. The building seemed unusually quiet, but from somewhere he heard the famed singing voice of Frank Sinatra. The voice was faint. The redhead cocked his head,

stood listening until he determined that the sound came from 7-B.

"What's the matter, Shayne?" Morrison wanted to know, his voice almost belligerent. "So the apartment door is open, so what? You've never been around kids, I guess. Kids invariably always leave doors open."

Shayne ignored the outburst. A sixth sense buzzed inside his skull. He moved cautiously toward the open door, putting the fat man behind him. He opened his coat, giving himself free access to the .45 that was snug in his shoulder rig. He stood at the door, sniffed. The scent of pine filled his nostrils. He frowned again.

He looked through the narrow opening, saw only a very narrow strip of living room. The sound of Sinatra was slightly louder now. He sniffed more pine scent and then he put a thumb against a door button. Chimes sounded from somewhere deep inside the apartment. But there was no movement inside, no voice calling out.

Behind the detective, Morrison gasped, "For God's sake, man, I didn't know I was hiring a TV detective!"

He stabbed an arm past Shayne and pushed the apartment door open, entered the

richly-appointed living room. "Debbie?" he called.

Shayne remained in the doorway, his keen gray eyes busy, every sense alive.

Morrison lumbered across the living room. "Debbie?"

He turned, scowled.

"Robin?" he called, his voice much stronger.

Silence—except for Sinatra.

Presentiment was on Shayne. Why had the door been ajar if no one was inside? Carelessness on the part of someone who had departed? Or had a quick departure—someone bolting—precluded making sure a door was pulled shut?

Shayne moved a couple of paces into the heavily-furnished front room. He stood on thick, chartreuse carpeting. There was an archway and a kitchen to his left, a closed door straight ahead, an open door to his right.

"Hey, is anyone here?"

Morrison called out.

Shayne took in the room again, magnetic eyes picking up details. It was a neat room. It looked as if it might have been cleaned that morning. The only blemishes against the cleanliness were the ashtrays. Everywhere the detective looked, he spotted an ashtray filled with cigarette butts. It was as if the cleaner had left them dumping and washing of the ashtrays as a



final chore and had not got around to them.

Shayne sniffed. The pine scent was much stronger now. And the voice of Sinatra just a bit louder. He traced the sound of that voice to the closed door straight ahead.

Morrison moved suddenly, going toward the open door to Shayne's right. Beyond the door, Shayne could see a large unmade bed, the blanket and sheets a tangle, and beyond the bed were French doors that opened onto a view of the Atlantic. It looked like a young girl's room. He said, "Wait a sec, Morrison."

Morrison snapped around. "I'm looking for my daughter, man!"

"You figure that's her room?"

"You hear Sinatra coming from the other bedroom? Well, that's gotta be Robin's room. She's been hung on the guy for years."

Morrison waddled into the bedroom, looked around, returned to the front room.

"Somebody's gotta be here," he snapped, going to the closed door. He rapped. "Robin?"

He got only Sinatra.

"All right, all right..." Morrison said.

Shayne tested the doorknob. It turned. He cracked the door. Sinatra came on stronger, the pine scent flooded his nostrils. There was no sound of shower water.

"Mrs. Morrison?"

Silence.

He sucked a breath and pushed the door wide open.

"Oh, my God!" Oscar Morrison gasped.

III

THE DEAD WOMAN lay on her back in the middle of the bed, legs together, ankles tight, toes up, arms at her sides, the fingers of her hands straight out. She was naked and a golden tan all over except for a white strip across her breasts and a bikini strip at her hips. The bed sheet under her smooth, the bed covers folded neatly just below her feet. Her

head was propped on a single pillow, spread, copper-colored hair a sharp contrast to the whiteness of a fresh pillow case. Her eyelids were closed, her lips parted just slightly. She looked as if she were at peace.

And Sinatra sang on...

Shayne glanced at Morrison. "Is it your former wife?"

"Y-yes. It's Robin." Morrison had paled. He stared without blinking.

Shayne edged toward a vantage from where he had a better perspective of the entire scene. Immediately to his right, French doors were open inward from a balcony and allowed a clear view of the brilliant day and the Atlantic. Conditioned air escaped and warm air flowed in.

Careful not to touch anything, the detective stepped onto the balcony. The beach, dotted with people, was below him. Not too far out from the sand a pair of sailboats bobbed across the waves. There was no ladder, no rope, no escape for a murderer from the balcony.

The redhead returned to the bedroom, scowled at the death scene again. He got the impression he might be staring on a body that had been prepared for respectable viewing and burial. If you could ignore the nakedness of the corpse. Two night tables framed

the head of the bed. Each supported a double candelabra. Fingers of fire continued to flicker from four bright red candles; it was obvious the candles had burned for many hours. Off in a far corner an incense burner gave off the pine smell, and from some hidden nook Sinatra continued to purr. A magazine was closed on the carpeting beside the bed. An ashtray that looked freshly washed was on one of the nightstands. An open package of cigarettes and a book of matches, the book centered on the cigarette package, was on the other. Large lamps also framed the bed. The lamp bulbs burned.

It all looked very neat. Very arranged.

Too neat. Too arranged.

Shayne scowled deeply and squatted to examine the lone article that was out of place. It was a white bra. It formed a tiny heap on the chartreuse carpeting. He did not touch the bra. He looked hard at Robin Morrison's exposed throat. There were faint, dark markings on the skin, one a-solid line that seemed to encircle her neck, the other claw marks.

It was not hard to figure. The bra had been the murder weapon, and a laboratory examination would turn up peelings of her own neck skin

under Robin Morrison's long fingernails.

Shayne got down on his hands and knees, much as if he were peering through a keyhole, and squinted into the open package of cigarettes. He guessed there might be seven to ten cigarettes in the package. He edged around to look in the exposed side of the closed matchbook. He was unable to count the matches, but he figured the pack was about half used.

Shayne went back up on his knees and contemplated. He remembered the filled ashtrays in the living room. It looked as if Robin Morrison had been a heavy smoker, and it also looked as if she might have gone to bed with a magazine and a fresh package of cigarettes and matches.

Fine. Except who had arranged everything so neatly? Who had dumped dead butts and ashes? Who had washed a bedside ashtray, but forgot those in the living room?

The murderer?

The detective suddenly looked for Oscar Morrison and found himself alone.

He scrambled to his feet and bolted into the front room. Morrison was in the other bedroom, bobbing around, looking inside a closet, under the bed, lumbering back out

into the living room. His mouth was a tiny pucker, his eyes glistened.

Shayne slammed palms against the fat man's heavy shoulders, jarring Morrison in mid-stride and straightening him.

"Cool it," Shayne snapped.

Morrison attempted to slide around the detective. "Where's my daughter? She could be dead too!"

Shayne pushed Morrison toward the front door. The fat man waved his arms wildly, fending off the redhead. Shayne sucked a deep breath of determination and clamped his large hands on Morrison's shoulders. Then Morrison surprised him. He shot a fist into Shayne's exposed middle.

Shayne grunted and lifted his long right arm. Like a sledge, he brought his fist down hard on the top of the fat man's head. The blow sent Morrison to his knees. Shayne allowed Morrison to pitch forward. Morrison managed to catch himself on his palms, and then he hung, wheezing and shaking his head.

Shayne said gruffly, "There's no one else up here, Morrison. I don't know where your daughter is. I don't know if she's dead or alive, but she isn't here. So let's you and me go outside and do some thinking. I don't

particularly care to be standing here should cops walk in."

He hooked big hands in Morrison's armpits, jerked the fat man up on his feet. Morrison had lost his steam. He didn't protest as the detective turned him to the open door. Shayne propelled Morrison out of the apartment. They went to the self-service elevator and down. The detective shot a wary look around the lobby. It still was empty, no one at the tiny corner desk. He pushed Morrison outside to the humidity and hot sunshine and across the street to the convertible, put him inside. Shayne rolled the car down the slight incline to a macadam parking area behind the beach, found an empty slot between a glistening station wagon and a kid-painted, old Ford.

"W-what are we doing here?" Morrison managed.

"We're debating," snapped Shayne, "about what we're going to tell the cops."

Morrison looked as if he had been stuck with a sharp pin. "I'm not going to any cops!"

"So what are you going to do, just fade back to Des Moines?" the redhead said sarcastically as he lighted a cigarette. He funneled a long stream of smoke.

"I'm going to look for my daughter!"

"Where?" Shayne said.

"Out here!" Morrison waved vaguely along the open beach.

Shayne glanced up and down the beach. Bodies, most of them browned by many suns, most of them young, were scattered haphazardly. A lean boy with a surfboard balanced on the top of his skull was moving into the water.

"Then you've got over this crazy idea your daughter might be dead too?" the detective said.

Morrison flinched, but he seemed to be gathering his wits.

"Yeah," he said jerkily. "Yeah, she ain't dead..."

"Would she kill her mother?" Shayne pressed. "She's eighteen, you said, and she's gone. She could've strangled her mother, cut. We found the apartment door open. Remember?"

Morrison left the car seat, slammed shut the door. "Okay, Shayne, you've got your two hundred. Fly."

The fat man went off toward the beach. Shayne scrambled after him, his strides long, his planted heels sinking deep into the loose sand. He caught Morrison's arm. "Use your skull, man," he growled. "Your ex-wife has been dead for a while. You saw the burning candles, the lamplight. She probably was killed sometime

last night. And your kid isn't around. Which could mean she killed and is on the run, with a helluva good start."

"Or she could have been out last night, returned home, found her mother dead," Morrison countered, "You go on back to your office, Mr. Shayne. I'll take care of things here now." He started off up the beach again.

Shayne grunted, stood his ground. Robin Morrison had been murdered. Robin Morrison had lived the good life. Witness the Golden Sand. The joint reeked of quiet wealth. Somewhere in the death of Robin Morrison there was a loose buck. Maybe not with Oscar Morrison, maybe not with an eighteen-year-old kid on the run, but somewhere...

"You don't get rid of me. I live on murder, pal. Let's go find your kid."

Morrison shook his head. "No, you don't, Shayne. You don't con me into pointing out my daughter so you can haul her to the cops."

The redhead sucked a deep breath. "Morrison, understand something: You're my client. That means I'm on your side. I don't Welch. I said earlier that we are going to the cops. That was because the cops, sooner or later, are going to be coming to you. They're going to be

pointed to, or find, your former wife's body. And then they're going to nose. And eventually they're going to discover you exist. Let 'em find out that you, a resident of Des Moines, Iowa, just happen to be in Dondo Beach on the same day they discover your ex-wife is a corpse and—"

Shayne cut off the words, lifted his hands in a gesture of impatience. "Cops are damned good at two and two. That two and two may not always add up to four to *you*, of course, but if it happens to come out even for the boys in blue you're probably going to wish you never heard of Dondo Beach, Florida.

"Morrison, you'll be on firmer ground if we go to the cops, explain your presence, point them to the body. You won't be a fugitive. You'll be a volunteer. You might even get lucky and—"

"I don't go anywhere until I find my daughter, Shayne."

"So let's cruise."

They moved up the beach, Shayne walking with long strides, giving, making no attempt to fight the tug of the sand. Morrison plodded, fighting all the way. They weaved between the browned bodies. Morrison searched faces, figures, spines.

And then the explosion came: "Daddy!"

Shayne stopped as the girl streaked out of a mixed cluster of youths and propelled herself against Morrison. "Daddy, daddy, what are you doing *here*?"

Debbie Morrison was long-legged, narrow in body, sun browned to a near-burnt toast color. She wore a purple bikini. Her bronze colored hair was short cropped, her young face unpainted. Shayne thought she had many of her mother's features.

"Daddy, tell me! What are you doing—"

"Vacation, doll," Morrison said, his voice cracking as he hugged the girl a second time. "I came to see you. I wanted it to be a surprise."

"Oh," the girl squealed, "if only you knew how many times I've been near running away from mother, how many times I've been tempted to pack a bag and arrive on *your* doorstep!"

"Debbie..."

"Come! You have to meet my friends! They are the only people who have kept me in Dondo Beach! Come on! They're right over—"

"Debbie, something has happened." Morrison hesitated, shot Shayne a glance. The detective stood silent, waiting.

How does a father tell a girl her mother has been murdered?

Then Morrison said, "It's— it's your mother."

"You've been up to the apartment?" The girl stepped back, cocked her head, looked briefly puzzled. Then her face cleared. "Ahhh, wait a sec. Mother is drunk!"

Morrison remained silent.

The girl shrugged. "Well, why not? She was stoned last night, so why not today?"

Morrison shuffled in the sand, tossed Shayne another harried glance. The detective said, "Debbie, my name is Michael Shayne. I'm a Miami private investigator, employed by your father to come here with him today. He can explain to you later why he employed me, but at the moment what he is trying to tell you is that we found your mother dead in the apartment."

The girl surprised Shayne. She could have screamed disbelief, she could have shrilled shock, she could have collapsed on the hot sand. But all she did was stare at Mike Shayne, green-flecked eyes mirroring nothing.

Finally she whispered, "Oh, God..."

Morrison took her narrow biceps, attempted to draw her close, but she stood firm, gently put him off. Her shoulders squared slightly and she continued to stare at Shayne.

"How did she die?" she asked flatly.

"It wasn't pleasant."

"Then she was murdered."

Shayne nodded.

"To her, it could happen."

"Debbie!" Morrison exploded. "Don't you want to cry? Don't you want to—"

"I'm all right, Daddy," the girl said calmly. "Mr. Shayne, can we go someplace? Away from the beach?"

"I've got a car in the parking lot."

Shayne watched Debbie Morrison return to her cluster of friends. Her spine remained straight, her strides steady. She said something to her friends. Some of them cast glances, no more. Then Debbie gathered a blouse, denim shorts and a pair of moccasins. She shrugged into the blouse as she returned, left it open. She got into the shorts and put her feet into the moccasins.

Morrison asked, "What did you tell your friends?"

"That you are my father."

"You didn't—"

"I didn't say anything about mother, no."

She moved along the beach, Morrison plodding along to keep pace. Shayne matched her strides. He was waiting. He expected Debbie Morrison to break down. The shock had to be ebbing now.



But she said, "Daddy, I'm all right. I'm not going to cry or become hysterical. I feel shocked, yes, but I can take it."

Morrison pulled back his head and shot a worried look behind the girl at Shayne as she walked on, smooth jaw jutting slightly. Either Debbie Morrison was one of the toughest kids he ever had encountered, or she was on a long time fuse.

They walked on to the macadam of the parking lot and the detective pointed to the convertible. Debbie Morrison glanced up at him. "Beautiful wheels, man." And then she turned to her father. "Are the pigs at the apartment?"

"No," Morrison managed to say.

Shayne ushered the girl into the middle of the front seat. "We're going to the police now."

"Why?"

It was a simple question, asked in a simple tone. Shayne faced the girl. "Why not?"

She matched his look. "Are you telling me, Mr. Shayne, that my mother's murder has yet to be discovered?"

"It's been discovered, honey," Shayne said, starting the convertible, "by your father and me."

She reached out and switched off the ignition key.

"Let's cool it a minute, man." She seemed to be thinking very hard. "What you're really saying is, you and father found mother murdered but no one else in town knows about it yet."

"Someone else probably has discovered the crime by now."

"But you're not sure of that."

"I'm not sure," Shayne agreed.

"So why can't father and I just cut?"

"Run?"

"I didn't say run, Mr. Shayne. I said cut. Neither one of us killed her." She paused, shot a quick look at her father. "You didn't, did you?"

"Good God..." Morrison gasped.

"There, see?" Debbie Morrison said almost triumphantly. "I can pack a couple of bags and father and I can go off to Des Moines or someplace. Later, after the killer has been apprehended, we can return and claim what rightfully belongs to us. If we hang around now all we're going to do is confuse the pigs. They'll be plenty busy as it is."

"Debbie," Shayne said patiently, "the police will want to talk to you. They're going to want to ask you questions about your mother, her acquaintances, her—"

"In this town? They already know all of that!"

"They still will want to ask."

"Well, can I go up to the apartment first?"

"What for?"

She suddenly seemed docile, a little girl. The sudden change surprised Shayne. He gave her a long look.

She said in a soft voice, "Mr. Shayne, I am not afraid of seeing my mother dead. I am not afraid of death. Death happens. I once found a drowned kitten, I once saw my dog, Cicero, after he had been hanged by his leash from a tree limb by a prowler. I had a girlfriend, Penny Harker, who was murdered in Miami six

months ago, some of my friends and I found a body on the beach here about a year ago, a man who had been stabbed, a man I knew. A shrink. All of this really happened to me, Mr. Shayne, so you see I am acquainted with death, I know what it looks like, I'm not afraid."

The detective silently wondered if she was acquainted enough to have killed her mother.

IV

DEBBIE MORRISON troubled Shayne. She seemed too cool, too aloof. Her reaction to her mother's death so far had been everything but conventional.

He asked, "Were you and your mother friends, Debbie?"

The girl looked mildly surprised. "What kind of a question is that?"

"The cops are going to ask a lot of questions," the detective said. "They're going to get personal as hell. There's nothing wrong with knowing just what kind of ground we happen to be standing on before we go to them."

The girl said, "No, mother and I were not friends. I learned to dislike her. Intensely. Not hate, dislike."

"How come?"



"She was selfish, for one thing."

"And?"

"Extremely domineering," Debbie said.

Morrison snapped, "Shayne are you going to drive us to the police station? None of this is your business."

Shayne gave him a hard look. "I became involved, Morrison, when we entered that apartment and found a body. The cops are going to want to talk to me too. Debbie, have you got any ideas about who might have killed your mother?"

She said slowly, "Not really

but lots of people in Dondo Beach didn't like her."

"Why?"

"Well, because she was Robin Morrison."

"That doesn't tell us much," Shayne said.

"All right, most of the women in town didn't like her."

"Why?"

"Because most of the men did."

"That figures," Morrison snorted.

The girl looked at her father. "Sure, it figures. You two broke up because of another man."

"Well, yes, but—"

"Oh, I know all about him, Daddy. His name was Reagan, wasn't it?"

"Well, yes—"

"I know all about Mr. Reagan and mother."

"But you were only fifteen."

"Well, perhaps you do."

"And there was a woman, too. You and a woman."

"Debbie..."

"But I can understand that. I can understand why you might turn to another woman."

"It really wasn't what you think, Debbie. In court, your mother made it look as if—"

"Daddy, mother was a bad woman."

Morrison said nothing.

"I think Paul killed her."

Shayne, who had been soaking up background, snapped, "Paul?"

"Paul Tower."

"Who's he?"

"Her boyfriend!"

"He lives in Dondo Beach?"

"He owns most of it, he and his father. The Tower family owns the town. They're contractors, they build things, like this town. Mother used to work for the old man, but you don't see him around much any more. He stays out at Tower House. That's where they all live, at Tower House. It's a fancy pad with a wall around it. Paul is the big wheel at the office now. Mother had the old man twisted around her little fingers, and she did the same thing to Paul when he took over. She could call in sick anytime and get away with it. Like today. She must've called in sick this morning."

"Just exactly what was your mother's job with the Tower people?"

"She was in the accounting department, she was the head of it. She moved up fast."

"You mean through her friendship with Tower and his son?"

"Through something."

Shayne took a stab. "Is Paul Tower married?"

"He used to be, but mother managed to take care of that."

"Do the Towers own the Golden Sand?"

"Sure, what do you think? How else could we live there? And if you think Mother paid rent, you're on a trip, man."

Shayne pondered for a few seconds. Surprisingly, both of the Morrisons remained silent. Then the detective looked Debbie Morrison square in the eyes. "Why would Paul Tower kill your mother?"

"Well, for one thing, he has a horrible temper. Way out. He flies fast, and when he gets that way, it's like he's in another world. You know?" She waved a hand vaguely toward the sky. "He goes way out there, like he's on a rug or something."

"And for another?" the detective prodded.

The girl seemed to search: "He and mother have had some pretty terrible battles."

"Most lovers do."

"I've seen him strike mother, knock her to the floor. And do you know what she'd do? She'd smile. She'd just sit there and smile up at the creep! It was like she had won something, Mr. Shayne. I've seen her there on the floor, blood trickling from a corner of her mouth, maybe, and yet all she was doing was smiling. It was weird!"

"Would she go to work the day after one of those fights?"



"Never."

"Was there a fight last night?"

"I don't know. There could've been, I suppose."

"Tower was at the apartment last night?"

The girl nodded. "He arrived around 6:30. I think he came from the country club. He had been drinking. He was in a fun mood. So was mother. She'd been drinking too, since coming home from the office. Paul wanted to kiss me, and mother said it was okay. That's the kind of mood they were"

"Kiss you!" Oscar Morrison exploded from the other side of his daughter.

She patted his meaty thigh. "He didn't, Daddy. I didn't let

him. I never have. Paul Tower always wants to kiss me. He says it's okay, that he's going to be my father someday. Of course, that isn't going to happen now."

"And your mother allowed—"

The girl interrupted, "Daddy, I never once let Paul Tower touch me. I've stayed away from him. I don't like him."

"But—"

Shayne cut in. "Debbie, did your mother and Tower go out last night?"

"I don't know. I left the apartment when he arrived. I came down here to the beach, found the gang. I didn't go back to the apartment until around one this morning."

"Was Tower still there?"

"I don't know."

Shayne frowned and the girl said, "Mr. Shayne, mother's bedroom door was closed."

"Then you didn't see her."

"No."

"You didn't talk to her, even through the closed door?"

"No. I never do. I always go straight to my bedroom, lock the door. All I heard was the tape. Sinatra. You'd have to have known my mother to understand that."

"Your father has explained."

"Was that how she was when you found her today? With Sinatra? The tape playing, the

candles burning, the whole bit?"

Shayne remained silent.

"Were the French doors open? The curtains blowing in, I'll bet. And the incense was burning. Pine scent, right. Red candles burning in two candelabra. And mother—"

"Debbie!" her father exploded.

"Oh, I've been there, Daddy," she said, patting his leg again. "I've been the route. I've seen it all hundreds of times!"

Shayne asked, "Debbie, what about this morning? When you got up. Did you see your mother?"

"No."

"Her bedroom door still was closed?"

"Yes."

"What did you do, fix breakfast?"

"I don't eat breakfast. I left the apartment, came down to the beach."

"Not even the least bit curious about your mother?"

"Not the least, right, Mr. Shayne. Paul Tower still could have been with her, probably was."

"I see. What time was it when you came down here?"

"Around ten-thirty, eleven. The ringing of the phone woke me. But when I answered, no one was on the line."

"And you've been on the

beach since walking out of the apartment this morning."

"My friends are down there. Ask them."

"Okay, Debbie, we're going to the police now. We're not stopping at the apartment or anywhere else. And you probably are going to have to tell all of this again."

She shrugged. "All of a sudden, I don't mind rapping with the pigs. In fact, I kinda like the feeling of laying a little on Paul Tower. Incidentally, how was mother killed? Was she shot?"

"It looks as if she might have been strangled with a bra."

"Hmm, that's strange. Mother hasn't been wearing bras recently. She went lib."

V

THE DONDO BEACH chief of police was a neat, bulky man named Roger Flynn, who did not know that murder had been committed in his town. He had a comfortable, modern office in a new City Hall building, and a two man staff. Both men were car patrolmen. The police would not know about a slaying inside the Golden Sand until someone called them. No one had called.

The on-the-death scene investigation by Flynn and his two patrolmen took almost

three hours. Shayne stewed, Oscar Morrison shuffled between impatience and wariness, but Debbie Morrison remained deadpan and quiet in the background. She looked impulsive. On the other hand, Shayne noticed that her ears were tuned and that her eyes took in every move.

Finally they returned to City Hall, where Flynn finished questioning the Morrisons while still standing on the sidewalk. Then he sent father and daughter across the street to take a breather over coffee and Coke.

Inside City Hall, the police chief settled in a leather chair behind his desk and sighed.

"Okay, Shayne, now that we're alone, let's you'n me spread it out. I've heard of you. You play ball with the police—and you probably already have been involved in more murder cases than I'll ever see in my lifetime. I have not investigated too many murders, thank God, and this one already is a touchy situation."

"Because of the victim or the suspect Debbie Morrison gave you?" Shayne asked from under a cocked eyebrow.

Flynn grunted. "The Towers built this town, they own most of it."

"Including you?"

"That's grounds for me to

become angry, Mr. Shayne, but I'm not because you don't know me. No, I'm not under the Tower thumb. Do you think Paul Tower might be my man?"

Shayne shrugged.

"More than Oscar Morrison might be my man? He could've come down to Florida last Saturday instead of last night. He said he quit his job on Friday. Okay, that's simple enough to check, and he knows it. But he could've caught a Saturday flight, checked things here Sunday and yesterday, killed his ex last night, returned to Maimi, then hit you this morning."

"The play with me being a false front," Shayne said thoughtfully. "His ex-wife is dead, he's killed her. But he still has to collect his daughter. And if he's with me, a reputable shamus—"

"He'd expect to be questioned, of course," Flynn nodded. "But if he showed here with you, with the story he gave you—well, there's a chance I might not consider an earlier visit to Dondo Beach. How'd he act today? Did he seem on edge?"

"Not particularly."

The police captain hesitated, twisted a pencil in his fingertips. "How'd the death scene strike you? Did you get the

impression Robin Morrison had been laid out?"

"Definitely."

"The candelabra, the incense, the condition of the bed, the position of the body—"

"The candles, incense and Sinatra you might be able to write off to the dame being a romantic," Shayne cut in. "The daughter says that kind of jazz was kind of routine with mother. I gathered she seemed to like mood background, especially with lovers on the scene. But the cleanliness of the room, the sheets—not a wrinkle in them—the body stretched out—I definitely got the impression, Flynn, someone arranged the victim. Incidentally was she sexually molested?"

"The doctor is still running some tests, but he said he doesn't think this was a sex killing."

"Which might leave us with a first-class weirdo."

"Unfortunately," Flynn acknowledged.

"Male or female."

"Female?"

"All killers aren't male, Captain. I understand Paul Tower has an ex-wife. Is she still in town?"

"Well, yes. As a matter of fact, she's still living at Tower House."

The detective frowned deeply.

"Don't ask me to explain, Shayne," Flynn said. "No one in town can. There's gossip, of course. Constance Tower is supposed to be having some mental problems. Maybe she is, maybe she isn't. Maybe it's the reason she hasn't been told to leave Tower House, maybe it's not. The town thinks it is. All I can tell you for sure is, Constance hasn't moved out."

"What's the setup at this house?"

"Well, it isn't exactly a compound, but it's the next thing to one, I suppose. The old man, R. Q., is the patriarch, I guess you'd say. His wife has cancer. She's dying. So the old man, supposedly retired a couple of years ago, but that really isn't true. R.Q. still pulls the strings. This town was his brainchild. He's built most of it. Even though Paul, the son, appears to have taken over the various Tower business ventures, the big decisions still are made right there in the house. That's where everyone lives. Paul and Constance and the daughter, Jo Tower Lang, and her husband, Louis. The old man keeps his thumb on things."

"I hear this Paul Tower has a bad temper."

Flynn nodded. "He's not a popular man in Dondo Beach."

"Are any of the Towers?"

"Most folks seem to like Jo Tower Lang, that's how she's known here. There's gossip about her, of course, as there is about anyone with money, I guess. She's an attractive woman and some folks say... well, that she sometimes is attracted. But you hear the same thing about her husband, too. Louis Lang supposedly likes woman. Maybe they both stray, I don't know. All I know is, they're husband and wife, they seem to get along, and most Dondo folks like them. Louis is involved in the business. But under Paul, of course."

Shayne pondered. "And Robin Morrison was scheduled to move into this menagerie, huh? With an ex-wife still on the premises. I don't get it. I mean, family is family, Captain, but—" Shayne let the words hang, shook his head, then said, "Do you suppose somebody out at Tower House didn't want Robin Morrison moving in?"

Flynn squeezed his eyes down, nodded. "Could be. I'll remember to ask."

Shayne lifted his head. "If you're going out to the house, I'd like to tag along."

"Right at the moment, I'm waiting for my men to find Paul Tower."

"He isn't in pocket?"

"We haven't located him,

that's all I can tell you. Of course, he could be out of town on business, except—”

“I'm right here, Flynn,” the loud voice said from the doorway.

Shayne twisted in his chair and saw a trim man of forty years who was expensively dressed in a blue business suit and who still had a good head of pure black hair. The man also was slightly flushed and looked as if he had been struggling with something beyond his control. His eyes hung on Shayne. They were dark eyes: cold, distant and angry.

“Paul,” Flynn said.

The trim man entered the office, stopped, the dark eyes never leaving the detective.

“You are?” His voice remained strong.

Shayne stood. “Bo-Peep.”

The trim man flinched slightly, the dark eyes flicking to Flynn, then snapping back to the redhead. “You were discussing me. Why? Who are *you* to be discussing me?”

“Paul,” Flynn said gently, “cool down. Allow me to introduce Mr. Shayne.” He performed the introduction, and Paul Tower stood for a moment, then turned on his heel and started out of the office.

“When you have finished with Mr. Shayne, Flynn,” he

said over his shoulder, “you may call me at Tower House.”

Flynn stopped him. “Don't force me to arrest you, Paul.”

Tower whirled. His body quivered and his mouth worked. “Do—what?” he managed to say.

“Sit down,” said Flynn, motioning to the chair Shayne had vacated. His voice remained calm, yet it contained sharp edges.

Tower didn't move.

“Sit, Paul,” Flynn urged gently. “I want to talk to you. Obviously, you are aware of the death of Robin Morrison.”

Tower stood quivering. Shayne had backed to a wall. He put his shoulders against the plaster, waited in silence. Tower glared for several seconds before he went to the chair and slammed his palms down on the back of it. His curled fingers worked. “Flynn, I don't like the idea of a stranger.”

“Shayne has an interest,” Flynn interrupted flatly. “He found Robin dead.”

Tower jerked, shot a side glance at the detective. “When?”

“Earlier this afternoon,” Flynn said.

“What was he doing at her apartment?”

Flynn ignored the question. “How did you hear about Robin, Paul?”

"I didn't hear, Flynn! I saw her!"

"When?"

"This morning!"

"When this morning? About what time?"

"Eleven-thirty or so. I really don't remember. What diff—"

"Why didn't you report the death to me? Wasn't it obvious Robin had been murdered?"

Tower jerked again. He lost composure. "She wasn't!"

"She wasn't?"

"Not murdered." Tower shook his head. "I can't...can't believe that."

"Did you kill her, pal?" Shayne asked from the wall.

VI

PAUL TOWER became so stiff Shayne thought he might splinter from the stress. Then Tower surprised him. Instead of exploding, he sagged suddenly and moved around the chair and sat in it. He fumbled for a cigarette, lighted it, his fingers trembling.

"Paul," Flynn said gently, "take it from the last time you saw Robin alive."

Tower got off to a hesitant start, but he picked up the pace as he talked. Shayne remained silent. Flynn didn't interrupt either. He waited until Tower had finished and then he shifted in his chair.



"Okay, you were out at the country club yesterday afternoon, played eighteen holes, then had a few drinks at the club bar. Around six to six-thirty you went to Robin's apartment. You remained until around eleven, you and Robin having more drinks and fixing a couple of steaks. You went to Tower House from the apartment, didn't see or talk to anyone at the house, retired, got up at seven this morning and was at the office at eight. Around ten-thirty you discovered that Robin had not come into work and you called the apartment, but you didn't get an answer. You called two more times, then drove over there and found her dead in bed. After that you—"

"Panicked," Paul Tower interrupted in a subdued voice. "I don't know why. It was the murder aspect, I guess. I was shocked. I couldn't believe, I still can't. I got into my car. I've been driving ever since. Don't ask me where I've been, Flynn I don't know. The entire afternoon is a blank to me now. All I know is, I finally came to my senses and came here."

"Question, Mr. Tower," Shayne said from his wall post. "Have you got a key to Robin Morrison's apartment?"

Tower twisted in the chair, fire returning to his eyes. He said nothing.

Flynn asked gently, "Do you have a key, Paul?"

"Certainly I have a key!"

"Did you use it to enter the apartment this morning?" Shayne asked.

Tower hesitated, then said, "I didn't get an answer when I pressed the door button, and I knew Robin had to be there. She wasn't at the office, so she had to be—"

"She could've been at the beach," Shayne interrupted. "Or maybe she'd gone out to buy groceries, maybe she—"

"I didn't have time to run all over town looking for her!" Tower flared.

"Pressing day, huh?"

Tower said nothing. He sat staring for a moment, then he

smoked jerkily, looked away from the detective.

"Okay," Shayne said, "you used your key, entered, found the body, then what did you do?"

"I told you, I panicked!"

"Does that mean you bolted immediately, or did you hang around the apartment for a while, maybe straightening things?"

Tower didn't seem to grasp the significance of the question. He wiggled in the chair and shook his head.

"I left the apartment," he said simply. "I don't remember going out."

"Did you run out?"

"I—think so. I'm not sure."

"So you could've left the front door of the apartment ajar."

"I could have, yes."

"Was the tape player on while you were up there?"

"The tape? Why, yes, it was!"

"Sinatra."

"Yes!"

"When you ran out, went downstairs, did anyone see you? There's a desk in the lobby of that building. Was—"

"I don't remember!"

Shayne pushed away from the wall, went to a corner of Flynn's desk, put a hip on the corner, looked straight down into Paul Tower's face.

"Pal, I think you forgot to tell us something about last night," he said firmly. "You made a pass at the Morrison girl, didn't you?"

"What?" Tower started to come up from the chair, then he thumped back hard. Suddenly his head went down and Shayne couldn't see his face. Tower's voice was surprisingly soft when he asked, "Where is that little witch?"

"You didn't try to kiss her?"

"You've talked to her."

Tower lifted his head. "There's something wrong with that girl, Shayne. She's always saying I make advances."

"And you never have?"

"My God, she's only eighteen! A child!"

"One of you is lying."

Shayne returned to his wall post. His lips were clamped and his jaw was tight. From his chair, Tower said to Flynn: "I've never in my life made the slightest improper advance on Debbie Morrison, Flynn."

The phone on Flynn's desk jangled. He swept up the receiver, listened briefly, and then said, "He's sitting in front of my desk."

Flynn listened again. "Okay." He put the phone together, looked at Tower. "Your brother-in-law is on his way here. One of my men spotted him up at Robin

Morrison's place. He said he was looking for you."

Louis Lang was a tall, lusty-looking man of forty-five or so with a blond handlebar mustache and tousled, corn-colored hair. He wore gray, flared slacks and a sport coat, vivid with bright blue and yellow stripes. He was aware of the murder. He acknowledged an introduction to Shayne. But then he said, "Where the hell have you been, Paul? I've been looking for you most of the afternoon. R. Q. has called a meeting. He wants to discuss Robin—our position."

"Naturally," Paul Tower said.

"We were supposed to have been at the house ten minutes ago."

Paul Tower stood. He seemed to shake himself down. He said, "Flynn, someone entered Robin's apartment, attacked her, killed her, fled. I doubt that you will ever find the man. It could have been anyone, a stranger, a tourist, someone from the beach, someone—"

"Tower?" Shayne broke in.

Paul Tower snapped around. His eyes were cold again.

"Some people don't write off murder."

Paul Tower braced himself. "Do I consider that a threat, Mr. Shayne?"

"Only if you killed her," the big redhead said.

"Mr. Shayne, return to Miami. You are not wanted."

He was not allowed to finish. Debbie Morrison said from the open doorway, "That's him, Daddy! That's Paul Tower!" Her young voice was shrill.

Oscar Morrison charged and looped a fist toward Tower's head. Tower managed to duck the blow, but Morrison slammed against him with his large body and spun the slighter man off balance.

Louis Lang leaped on Morrison's back. The fat man, surprisingly agile, doubled forward and flipped Lang on over his head. Lang's feet caught Flynn on the chest as the police captain came around a corner of his desk. Lang and Flynn went down in a tangle of arms and legs.

Tower had regained his balance. He started to take a step into Morrison and then he became rooted, his eyes widening. Morrison was crouched now, wheezing, his lips working and his eyes filled with poison. He had produced a pocket knife, and the blade was open, the point dancing before Tower.

"I'm gonna teach you, creep, never to touch a young girl again!" he wheezed.

Shayne moved. He put his

large body between Tower and the crouched fat man.

"Knock it, Morrison," he snarled. "You've made your point."

"Out of my way, detective or you get it first!"

Shayne saw movement in the corner of his eye. Flynn was going for a belted gun.

The detective took a step into Morrison, his long arms hanging loose. Morrison backed slightly.

Shayne flexed his fingers, widened his stance. He felt balanced and ready for anything. He kept his eyes on Morrison's face, watching for a muscle tic, the tightening of lips, the narrowing of eyes, any little message that would tell him Morrison was going to charge.

Morrison lunged, driving the pocket knife straight ahead toward Shayne's solar plexus. The detective sidestepped easily, caught Morrison's wrist. But Morrison's skin was wet with perspiration and Shayne lost the grip. He danced nimbly aside, but not before Morrison had slashed with the knife. Shayne didn't feel anything, but suddenly a red streak appeared across the back of his left hand.

He snarled. He no longer had any intention of being gentle with his client. With his bleeding

hand, he snapped Morrison's knife arm aside as he sliced a stiff right hand down into the crook of Morrison's fat neck.

The blow brought a howl from the fat man and dropped him to one knee. Shayne came up hard with his left knee, driving it into Morrison's face. Morrison went back, his head rolling. He slammed against the front of the desk and then he slumped to one side. Suddenly he was on the floor and quiet, the pocket knife still gripped in his fingers.

Shayne bent over the fat man. He hoped he hadn't killed Morrison. The fat man suddenly shuddered all over and groaned. Shayne grunted and took the pocket knife from Morrison's fingers, closed the blade and tossed the knife to Flynn.

And that was when Debbie Morrison landed. "Filthy pigs!" she screamed, leaping on Shayne's back and locking her legs around his middle as she caught his red hair and yanked.

Shayne reached back and jammed stiff thumbs against the girl's exposed ribs. Her legs unlocked as she gasped. She slid from the detective's back. He turned, picked her up by her armpits and plopped her down hard in the chair in front of the desk. Towering over her, he snarled, "Don't move!"

She flinched, the green-

flecked eyes flared, and he thought she was coming up again. But abruptly she settled and slumped. And then she put her face in her hands, doubled forward and rocked silently.

Shayne turned to Flynn. The police captain had Morrison on his feet. Morrison was groggy but capable of standing.

Behind Shayne, Paul Tower hissed, "I want that man arrested for assault! I want him—"

"He's already in custody, Paul," Flynn said grimly. "Now, everybody clear out of here. Everybody! That includes you, Shayne!"

"What about the girl?" the detective rasped.

"She goes too!"

Debbie Morrison looked up. She looked defiant. Shayne saw her mouth work, and he knew what was coming. He stepped quickly between the girl and the police captain. Debbie Morrison's spittle splashed against Shayne's shirt front. He reached down and clamped a hand on the girl's shoulder, yanked her out of the chair and propelled her out of the office. Outside, he plopped her into the front seat of his convertible and then he leaned over her.

"Kid," he snarled, "I feel like hanging you up by your heels."

"Dirty old man," she said,

slumping in the seat. Suddenly she would not look up at the detective.

He stood for several seconds, staring down on her, breathing harshly, and then he went around the front of the car and got behind the steering wheel. As he turned the convertible from the parking lot into the street, he saw Paul Tower and Louis Lang pulling away from City Hall in separate cars. Tower glared at him and zoomed off. Lang shook his head, waved half-heartedly, and then drove away at a cautious pace.

Shayne pointed the convertible down the Miami highway and tromped on the accelerator. Debbie Morrison remained slumped, said nothing. It wasn't until they were inside the Miami city limit that she asked in a meek voice: "Where are you taking me?"

"My secretary has an extra bed," the detective growled.

"But maybe I wanted to stay in Dondo."

"Not a chance."

"I'd like to be near my father. What are the pigs going to do to him?"

"Let him cool, I'd guess. We'll go back to Dondo in the morning. I'll see what I can do for the crazy fool."

"Why do you call him a fool? Wouldn't you be angry if

a dirty old man was always trying to kiss—"

"Paul Tower says he's never made an improper move toward you in your entire life, kid."

"Does he?" It was all she said. She continued to sit slumped.

VII

LUCY HAMILTON'S apartment was on a side street between Biscayne Boulevard and the bay. It was large and tastefully-decorated. There was a warm, friendly air about it. Brown eyes curious but no questions asked, Lucy welcomed Debbie Morrison, pointed her into the shower off the extra bedroom. Then Lucy returned to the front room and a pacing Michael Shayne recounted the day.

Lucy absorbed the explanation, nodded, and said, "She can stay here as long as necessary, Michael. And it sounds as if she has not eaten today. I'll put something together. How about you?"

"Not hungry, Angel."

"Well, come on out to the kitchen. We can talk while I fix. Are you going to leave Oscar Morrison in that jail?"

"He's earned a stay."

Lucy remained silent, her back to the detective.

"Okay, Angel," Shayne said

with a sudden and huge grin as he watched Lucy take down a bottle of cognac and dig an ice cube tray out of the refrigerator. He went to her, towered over her and knew an urge to kiss the nape of her neck. Instead he took the bottle from her and poured over the cubes in the glass.

"The guy could've killed his former wife," the detective said between sips of cognac. "It could've happened just like Flynn laid it out. On the other hand, this Paul Tower had the opportunity—and maybe a motive we don't know about. Hell, you can say the same thing about that kid back there in the shower, or somebody else in the Tower clan, or maybe some other upstanding citizen of Dondo Beach. One thing is certain, the killer had easy access to her. He or she already was inside the apartment, had a key to the door or punched the chimes and was allowed to enter. The thing that bugs me is the way she was laid out. It borders on ritual, but—"

"But?"

Shayne finished the cognac with a quick swallow: "Well, hell, it just borders, that's all, Angel."

"Remember that murder here a few months ago?"

"What murder?"

"Oh, it wasn't one of your cases, but it was in the papers for a few days. It was—oh, now I remember. It was while you were in California on the Jackson diamond case. You probably don't remember. There was a girl, one of these topless dancers from a club. She was found in her apartment. She'd been killed and then someone had put candles around her and—oh, I don't remember all of the details. Call Tim Rourke. As I recall, he wrote the stories about her."

"What was the girl's name?"

"I don't remember. Hey, you seem excited. What's—"

"Never mind," Shayne said, returning to the front room and the telephone. He dialed Rourke's home number. Rourke was a close friend of long standing; for many years a police reporter at the *Miami Daily News*, a man Shayne trusted totally and a gold mine of information when it involved happenings in Miami.

"Sure, I remember that killing," Rourke said. "It's one of the unsolved ones. The cops drew blanks. I don't forget those kind, Michael. The girl's name was Penny Harker. She was a kid, really, eighteen, nineteen—"

"Bingo," breathed Shayne. Rourke paused and Shayne had a mental picture of the

other end of the phone line, the tall, almost cadaverous-looking newspaperman standing there scowling in contemplation now as his nose began to quiver. Shayne knew Rourke suddenly was smelling a story.

"See you at the newspaper office in twenty minutes," Shayne said. "We're going to do some digging in the morgue."

"Right."

There was a fat manila envelope marked *Penny Harper—Murder* in the newspaper morgue. The clippings filled in Shayne. Penny Harker, eighteen, had been killed in the apartment where she had lived alone in the early hours of a morning. She had been strangled when the killer had twisted a bra around her neck. She was the daughter of a Mr. and Mrs. Clinton Harker of Dondo Beach who had thought their daughter was attending an airline stewardess school in Miami. The Harkers were shocked when they learned their Penny actually had been a topless dancer in a sleazy joint in the city's bowels.

"She hustled beer between shows, Mike," Rourke put in. "So she made more contacts than a flea at a dog pound."

Shayne waved off the newspaperman as he continued to read. When the cops had found Penny Harker, she was

stretched out naked on the hardwood floor in the front room of her cheap apartment. Candles that had been jammed into the holes of beer cans ringed her body. An empty wine bottle had been placed at the top of her head and two cheap wine goblets were at her feet. Her hair had been carefully spread under her shoulders and back and had looked combed out. Her hands had been placed on her abdomen. She had looked as if she had been laid out in a casket, except there was no casket.

"Sex?" Shayne asked Rourke.

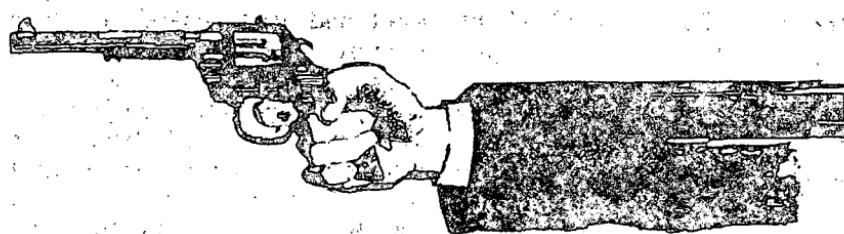
The tall man shook his head. "It's somewhere there in the clips. The cops said no sex was involved."

"And the investigation went limp immediately?"

"The cops shook down all the regulars at the joint where she worked, and even managed to trace a few first-timers, but they didn't come up with a killer. Mike, do you mind telling me what the hell is going on?"

Shayne filled in Rourke and the newspaperman looked mildly surprised. "You're on that Dondo thing, huh? I heard about it this afternoon. Our stringer up there filed a story."

"Penny Harker was from



Dondo Beach, Tim, and Robin Morrison was killed in—

"Un-huh. And somebody likes to lay out bodies after killing."

"A bra was the murder weapon in both cases, too."

Shayne stood, his scowl deep. Rourke said quickly, "Where are you going?" "I've got an urge to tear holes in walls, Tim." "Yeah, I know, Mike," Rourke said thoughtfully. "Just like I want to get to a typewriter. But what do we really have?"

Shayne stared hard at his friend. "Let's sleep on it," Rourke said. "We might save some wheel spinning."

VIII

WEDNESDAY was another bright Florida day. It was nine-thirty when Shayne entered the downtown building on Flagler Street and rode the elevator up to a door marked:

Michael Shayne, Investigations. Lucy was at her desk in the outer office, pert in a green frock and brown curls.

"How's the Morrison girl?" Shayne asked, sailing his Panama toward the old fashioned coat rack in a corner. The Panama settled on a brass hook.

"Sleeping," Lucy said. "I left a note, told her to call when she awakened. What are you going to do with her, Michael?"

"I hope she'll be content to stay where she is until I can get her father out of jail."

"Then you will be in Dondo Beach today?"

"Later. I want to talk to the girl first. She and Penny Harker once were friends."

"Ah, Tim was able to help." "His morgue turned up some interesting possibilities."

The detective moved toward his inner office as the phone on Lucy's desk jangled. He heard her answer and then she said, "Michael, it's an R. Q. Tower calling from Dondo Beach."

Shayne went to his desk, yanked the phone receiver from its hook. "Mike Shayne here." "Can we dispense with preliminaries, Mr. Shayne?" the heavy voice in his ear asked. "I think we are aware of one another."

"Shoot, Mr. Tower."

"Do you plan to investigate the slaying of Robin Morrison, perhaps take up the cause of this man Oscar Morrison who is in jail?"

"What's it to you?"

"Please, Mr. Shayne, you do not have to become defensive. I want to talk with you about the matter. Say, four o'clock this afternoon here at Tower House. I think we can agree on a financial consideration."

Shayne grunted, sat against the edge of his desk. He suddenly had someone involved in the Morrison case who could afford him.

"I'll be up there sometime today, Mr. Tower," he said.

"I will be available at four o'clock, Shayne. Not before, nor later. The remainder of my day is filled."

"If I'm in Dondo at four, I'll drop in," the detective said flatly.

"Mr. Shayne, I—" The heavy voice dribbled off.

Shayne grinned as he waited. It was a crooked grin and there was no humor in it. Tower

wanted him. Definitely. But the patriarch might as well know from the beginning that he was not manipulating one of his puppets now.

"All right, Mr. Shayne," Tower finally said, the heavy voice bedgrudgingly compromising, "at your convenience."

"Right," Shayne said. He put the phone together. For a moment, his grin was genuine. He wondered if Tower might be scowling. Then he got the shoulder rig and .45 out of a bottom drawer of his desk. He put on the rig and went into the outer office.

Lucy frowned on the rig. "Trouble? I didn't think this was that kind of case. I thought that, for a change, you've hooked into a case that involves only a skull cap. No violence."

"So far it's shaped that way," Shayne admitted, going for his Panama. "But you know me, doll. I always figure that somebody somewhere along the line is going to try to cave in my head or shoot out my eyes or—"

"Michael!"

Shayne clomped the Panama on his head. "I'll call you from your place. I'm going to talk to Debbie, then I'm cutting for Dondo. I'll let you know what to do with the girl."

"She could have a few ideas of her own," Lucy warned.

"So you can take her to the zoo. Let her try out her ideas on the zebras."

"Thanks."

"Anything for a good secretary," the redhead said with a wink.

He found the front door of Lucy's apartment locked, and Debbie Morrison did not answer the summons of his thumb against the buzzer. He stood scowling at the door for a few seconds and then a thought made his heart leap.

Was it possible that Debbie Morrison could be laid out on a bed inside the apartment, candles burning around her inert body?

Shayne turned up the building superintendent, a bustling woman who liked him. She used a pass key. The detective shot into the apartment, moved around the interior swiftly. Then he stopped and breathed deep. The apartment was empty, the bed in the extra bedroom unmade.

Shayne called Lucy. "The kid's vamoosed. She may be on her way to Dondo. She was pretty hug up about her old man being in the can. I'm heading up that way now. I may find her hitchhiking."

He cruised at a sane pace along the highway, keeping a sharp eye out for a girl hitchhiker. He saw none. It was

noon when he arrived in Dondo Beach. He stopped at City Hall, but Flynn wasn't in his office and the patrolman named Larson who sat in Flynn's chair wasn't sure where the captain could be found.

"You people seen the Morrison girl today?" Shayne asked.

Larson frowned. "No. I thought you took her to Miami."

"She cut on me," Shayne said. "How's Morrison doing?"

Larson shrugged. "Sitting back there and staring. He's been quiet. Too quiet."

"When's Flynn letting him out?"

"I'm not sure he is. Paul Tower filed formal charges this morning."

"Okay if I look in on Morrison?"

"Sure."

Morrison was lethargic. Shayne's appearance didn't seem to add ginger. Morrison sat slumped and alone in a cell. None of the other cells were occupied.

"Shayne," he grunted. "I figured you'd dumped me by now. Is Debbie with you?"

"No." And then the redhead lied. "She's staying with my secretary in Miami." For the moment, he saw no reason to add to the fat man's misery.

"Know what, Shayne? I'm

gonna get hung with a murder rap. I've been thinking, and I—

"Did you kill her, Oscar?"

"Hell, no. But I'm sure as hell gonna—"

"Then you don't get hung. I'll have you on the street by five o'clock this afternoon."

Morrison shook his head. "I doubt it. This is a stacked deck. Money against a nobody. The charge is simple assault at the moment, but—"

"You need anything? Cigarettes?"

"Naw." Oscar Morrison lay back on the bunk and dropped a heavy forearm across his eyes. "I just wanna think."

Shayne found a small steak-house. Oscar Morrison's mood troubled the detective. He had expected to find a man pawing the bars to get outside. Instead, Morrison seemed defeated and resigned.

Shayne pondered over a sirloin sandwich. Why was Morrison so downcast? Simple assault was a flea charge. A second thought on Paul Tower's part and the charge could be wiped from the books. Tower would have that second thought this same afternoon. It would be a part of the fee the redhead charged R. Q. Tower.

The detective asked directions to Tower House as he paid his tab. He found the compound walled with white stone

and sitting on a slight elevation. The back of the compound looked open to the Atlantic. In front it was manicured grass and other green things. There was a Mercedes, a Lincoln Continental and a Jaguar, all new, in a high carport, and two stalls remained for fresh automotive whims.

It was ten minutes before two o'clock when he put a thumb against a button on the pillared veranda. A Negro butler escorted him into a vast, luxurious library where he was confronted by a small, slight man with a shock of snow-white hair.

R. Q. Tower looked expensive but casual. He was mid-sixties with white eyebrows that had been trimmed by an expert.

Two women left wing chairs to stand. One was tall, skinny, drooping and had bad coloring. Her hair was parted in the middle and long, pulled down to the sides of her face and fitting her head close. Shayne thought her unattractive, probably sixty. She was R. Q. Tower's wife.

The other woman was much younger, but old-fashioned in dress and appearance. Dark hair, sprinkled abundantly with gray, was curled tight against her head and a plain face showed no trace of makeup.

Her nose was long, and her dark eyes were hollow.

"My daughter-in-law," said Tower.

Both women left the library.

Tower fitted a cigarette into a holder, lighted it, then sat in one of the wing chairs. He waved the cigarette at the other chair. And then he stared hard at the detective.

"We've just met, Mr. Shayne, and I don't like you," he said coldly. "I am very good at first impressions."

"What do you want, pal? You may already be wasting my time."

"I want," R. Q. Tower said evenly, "you to go back to Miami and conduct your normal business, forget Robin Morrison and Dondo Beach. I am prepared to pay you one thousand dollars for your inconvenience of driving up here this afternoon."

IX

SHAYNE didn't flick a muscle. "Why don't you want me poking, Tower? Are you hiding something you think I might find and Captain Flynn won't—or if he does, you can hush him?"

"Check or cash, Mr. Shayne?"

"Did you hire the death of Robin Morrison?"

Tower's smile was cold. "See how absurd one's thinking can be?"

"Because neither you nor your wife are pleased about the separation of your son Paul from his wife Constance and neither of you wanted Robin Morrison in Tower House?"

Tower left the chair, went to a window, stood with his back to the detective. Shayne stood. "Your son and wife separate, yet the wife remains in this house. Why? There's a reason."

"Please go, Mr. Shayne," the small man said without turning. "It is obvious we can not do business."

But Shayne pressed. "Has Constance had psychiatric care?"

Tower twisted around slowly. His lips twitched. "Which is not your concern."

"She didn't just happen to kill some psychiatrist out there along the beachfront about a year ago, did she?"

The detective was blindly shooting arrows now, trying for any stab that might give him an opening. "Maybe she killed Robin Morrison, too." He continued while he had the small man rocked back. "Maybe you are protecting her."

"Get out of my home!" Tower snarled.

"Or are you throwing up another wall for your son?"

"Get out" Tower shouted angrily.

Shayne walked out of the house, got into the convertible and rolled away from the compound. He would not have been surprised if the convertible had exploded in his face. He figured that if R. Q. Tower could trigger an explosion by telepathy, it would be done.

He drove through town and past the Golden Sand, coasted down to the beach parking area and braked. Twisting in the seat, he stared up at the highrise. He wondered if Debbie Morrison was up there. He slapped the steering wheel, then walked the beach, searching the tanned bodies. He did not find Debbie. Finally he conceded he wasn't thinking straight.

He returned to the convertible and found Captain Flynn sitting alone in an unmarked car next to the topdown.

"I heard you were in town again," Flynn said. "Larson, I followed you here from Tower House. Are you looking for the girl?"

"If she hits town, she'll head straight for your jail," Shayne said.

"Yeah, I'd figure it that way, too." Flynn nodded. "Well, how about a drink?"

They went to a cozy bar and sea food house, named the Sea

Gull. They sat at a tiny table in a corner.

"Why the visit to Tower House?" Flynn wanted to know.

Shayne grunted. "The old man offered me a grand to get out of town."

"Interesting."

"Have you ever known Tower to run scared about anything?"

"No."

"Is he the kind of man who would hire a killing?"

Flynn said thoughtfully, "He has the money."

"Or maybe he's attempting to protect someone."

"Paul?" Flynn said with a lifted eyebrow.

"Constance Tower maybe."

Flynn looked surprised. "Constance kill Robin Morrison?" He shook his head.

"She'd have motive. The breakup of the marriage. The threat—more than a threat, really—to her comfort."

"Constance Tower seldom leaves the compound," Flynn said. "I'm not sure she knows how to drive a car. She'd have to get from Tower House to the Golden Sand some way."

"She had some psychiatric care. Tower admitted as much. Flynn, you had a killing up here about a year ago, a guy found dead on the beach. I hear he was a headshrinker. Was there

any connection between this man and Constance Tower?"

"Good Lord, no!"

"Did you find the man's killer?"

"No. But how do you know about—"

"Debbie Morrison."

"Yes. She was among the group of kids who found the body. The man's name was Adolph Narnsburg. He was a Miami man, a bachelor, vacationing here. He was staying at one of the cabanas along the beach. The Miami police helped me with that one. We finally concluded that one of Narnsburg's patients may have followed him up here, killed him, vanished. It sounds lame, I know. But—" Flynn let it hang with a shrug.

"How was the guy killed?" Shayne pressed.

"Stabbed in the heart with a sharp instrument, probably a knife. But we didn't find it, never will. It's probably buried in the sand out there in the Atlantic. Shayne, I don't understand your interest in—"

"Was Narnsburg laid out on the sand? You know, neat, like we found Robin Morrison."

"No. What are you driving at, man?"

"I did a little checking into the killing of Penny Harker in Miami. You remember her? She was a Dondo Beach girl."

"I remember her. But why—"

"She was laid out after she was killed. Similar to Mrs. Morrison."

Flynn's brow furrowed. "I really don't remember too much about the death of the Harker girl. The papers, of course, carried—"

"Was she popular here?"

"Most folks in town knew her. And most were surprised that she was killed. But what she was doing in Miami, her job—well, I guess that was as much a surprise as her death."

"Was there a link between her and any Tower?"

"No. Penny knew the clan, of course, and I'm sure they knew who she was, but—"

"Then you wouldn't be able to buy a tie between the deaths of Robin Morrison, the Harker girl, and maybe this guy Narnburg, huh?"

"No," Flynn said slowly. He watched an attractive blonde woman enter the Sea Gull and sit at the bar before he said, "Shayne, I feel frustrated. I'll concede there's an *outside chance* Penny Harker's and Robin Morrison's killers may be the same person, but Narnsburg's—no. He was stabbed and left to die, period. And almost anyone could've killed him. His body was found in a remote area on the beach. At first, I

thought that was odd, then I learned the man's habits. He was a night walker. He often walked alone into the remote areas at night. Now, if I discovered his habits, almost anyone else could have. Anyone could have trailed him and killed him."

"And there was no connection between Narnsburg and the Towers? Constance Tower, for instance. Could he have been treating Constance?"

"Narnsburg was a stranger here, a vacationer, nothing more. A few people in town seemed to know who he was, but that was only because he apparently was an affable man, maybe a little lonely. He would stop and talk to people on the beach. That did not include any of the Towers. The Towers do not go to the public beach."

"Did Penny Harker go to the public beach?"

"Yes, certainly."

"And Robin Morrison?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

Flynn shook his head. "The three murder victims had nothing in common. The Harker girl and Robin Morrison knew who each other were, naturally, but it ended there. The Harker girl was among the group that found Narnsburg's body. Neither knew the other while they were alive. Narn-

burg once attempted to strike up a conversation with Robin Morrison on the beach, but nothing came of it. Now if you can—"

"Hold it," Shayne said sharply. "Narnsburg and Mrs. Morrison?"

Flynn flipped a hand. "It was a casual thing. It happens all of the time here. Robin Morrison was sunning on the beach one afternoon, Narnsburg came along, apparently found her attractive, attempted to talk to her. She sent him traveling."

"Who said?"

"She said."

Flynn sighed. "Look, in our investigation of the man's death we attempted to find anyone who might have been acquainted with him, even in the slightest way. Someone—I don't remember who—mentioned having seen Narnsburg and Robin talking on the beach. I went to Robin, asked her about the man. She said she didn't know him. She said he merely had been a pest on the beach. She said she brushed him off."

Shayne finished his cognac, drank ice water. "What do you really know about Robin Morrison, Captain?"

"Well, not too much, if we're getting down to specifics," Flynn said after a moment's pause.

"In murder, you get down to

specifics," the redhead said. "For instance, one specific: I have the impression Debbie Morrison didn't like her mother."

"Could be," said Flynn.

"And there's the Paul Tower thing. Robin Morrison broke up a marriage."

"You could say that, yes."

"Robin Morrison was living rent-free in a fancy apartment."

"Was she?"

"Paul Tower beats up on Robin Morrison."

"Who says?"

"The daughter. The daughter also says mama took the beatings without a whimper. That makes me suspicious as hell. Could Robin Morrison have been holding some kind of club over Paul Tower and each beating merely made the club bigger?"

Flynn said nothing.

"Could R. Q. Tower have been aware of the club? Could the club finally have become too big, even for him? Did he decide to eliminate the wielder?"

"Shayne, you've thrown out so many possibilities—"

"It's when you don't taste them all, Flynn, that a murderer runs off into a corner and laughs at the world."

The police chief pondered for several seconds before he said, "Okay, out of all of this



speculation, I notice you haven't included Oscar Morrison."

"And you like him as a killer."

"I have him in my jail on an assault charge, that's all. But he could've killed Robin. Motive? I don't know. Perhaps pure hate. Why haven't you included him in your speculation, Shayne?"

"What's he been doing since you canned him?"

"Sitting and staring."

"No confessions? No rambling about wanting out of jail?"

"No."

"Has he asked about his daughter?"

"I told him you had her under your wing."

"And he reacted how?"

"Stared."

"Do you think the guy is a nut?"

"No."

"But he's sitting and staring."

"That's all he's doing."

"Eating?"

"Picking, not eating."

"Maybe he's thinking hard about something."

"He could be making up his mind about how he is going to confess, choosing his words, putting it all together in his head. Maybe he's one of those kind."

"He's a salesman, Flynn, has been most of his life. I've got a hunch he doesn't waste time picking words. I've got a hunch the flow comes naturally."

"In other words, if Morrison was going to confess to murder, I'd have heard it by now."

"That's the way I've got him pegged," Shayne nodded.

"But you could be wrong about him."

"Sure," the detective conceded. "And time will tell, I guess." Then he said, "Let's get back to the Towers and Robin Morrison. I'm curious about a couple of things."

"I'm no expert on the subjects," Flynn said.

"I understand Robin Morrison had a good job with the Towers."

"Head of the accounting department," Flynn nodded.

"The town generally conceded it was a good job."

"And that she got the job via a little hanky-panky with Paul Tower?"

Flynn shrugged. "There are some who might say that."

"Who was the chief accountant before her?"

"A woman named Mrs. Cain."

"What happened to her? Is she still in town?"

"Yes. She works for Wedge Real Estate now, keeps the books, I understand."

"Was she fired at Towers?"

"She says she was."

"To make room for Robin Morrison."

"Who already was working for the Towers."

"But suddenly she becomes the head of a department."

"You're trying to build something, Shayne. Whatever it is, it just might not exist, you know."

"Point, pal, until I do know I'm not going to be happy. Now, let's see. Papa has retired and son, Paul, is head of the Tower operations. So where does the son-in-law fit?"

"Louis Lang?" Flynn frowned slightly, shook his head. "I really don't know. But he seems to keep busy, I'll say that much. Some folks around here think he should be the head of the company. Louis is pretty

well liked. Incidentally, that's Louis' wife, Jo Tower Lang, at the bar. The blonde. She came in shortly after we did."

Shayne shot the blonde a side glance. She sat on a black chair stool, facing away from them, good legs crossed. She looked trim at forty. He wondered if her appearance at the Sea Gull was happenstance. She had their table in view via a back bar mirror, but she didn't seem to be paying any particular attention to them.

"She's in here often," Flynn said, answering an unasked question. "It's one of her hangouts. She has several in town. I told you she and her husband move around some."

"Un-huh," Shayne grunted, leaving the table. Outside he said, "Recommend a motel for the night."

Flynn looked mildly surprised. "You're going to stay in town?"

"If for no other reason," Shayne said, "to harrass R. Q. Tower." He grinned suddenly. "What do you want to bet he has his spies watching me?"

Flynn frowned. "Jo?"

"I'll find out," the redhead said.

X

THE POLICE CAPTAIN pointed Shayne to the Sand

Dollar Motel. It was a neon and glass ocean layout on the edge of Dondo Beach. After registering, the redhead stood for a moment outside the office. He did not spot Jo Tower Lang. He went to his unit. It faced the beach. Five strides from the door and he was on sand. He went inside the unit, lit a cigarette and plopped on the edge of a bed. Exactly ten minutes later, there was a knock on his door.

"It's open," he yelled.

Jo Tower Lang opened the door but did not move to enter. She stood framed against the beach and the sea and the brightness of the outdoors, head cocked slightly, her figure striking in a pale green pant suit.

"Come on in, Mrs. Lang," Shayne said, waving the cigarette.

She entered slowly and looked around as she shut the door behind her. Shayne pointed to a chair. "Sit. And what new offer do you bring from Poppa?"

She sat. She did not smile. But she seemed at ease. She took a few seconds to eye the detective with what he thought was genuine curiosity, and then she said, "I'm here for myself, Mr. Shayne. I know of father's offer, of course. And I know you refused him. But he did not

send me, and there is no new offer. He made you a business proposition, you turned it down, so it is finished."

"But?" the redhead said, cocking a shaggy eyebrow.

She took a moment before she continued. "I am curious about you. I don't understand your interest in Robin's death. Two days ago you didn't even know Robin Morrison existed, yet now—"

"Did you kill her, Mrs. Lang?"

She looked mildly surprised. "Why would I?"

"Maybe you didn't want her moving into Tower House. Robin Morrison was an attractive woman."

"I assume you are alluding to my husband's reputation for being attracted to other women. You missed something, Mr. Shayne. Louis also is attracted by Tower money. I have that money. Robin did not, would not, even if she and Paul had married. Father is not fond of dividing the pot into many small pieces."

"Well, maybe he didn't want her in Tower House. Maybe he hired her death. Maybe—"

"Mr. Shayne, what kind of a man do you think my father is? Hard? Yes. Shrewd? Yes. But do you honestly think he is a man who could take a human life?"

"I don't know," the redhead said honestly. "All I know is, there already is one daughter-in-law—or ex-daughter-in-law, if you prefer—on the scene. Maybe he didn't want to change."

"Constance is there because mother wants her there. Mother likes Constance. She doesn't understand the split between Paul and Constance, she hasn't accepted it, I doubt that she ever will—which gets us to something else you apparently have missed, Mr. Shayne. Father likes what mother likes."

"So all the more reason for him to hire a murder, maybe," the redhead shrugged.

Jo Tower Lang suddenly flared, "Are you deliberately attempting to needle me?"

He grinned. "It seems I have, honey."

"Why don't you go back to Miami? Get lost! Leave us alone!"

"Father will take care of everything, huh?"

"Yes!"

"Except your father may be in over his head this time, doll. It's scary, isn't it? Even the thought that he might have had some—"

"He didn't!"

"But someone killed or had Robin Morrison killed. Who? Constance?"

Jo Tower Lang sat with her mouth hanging open.

"About a year ago there was a man named Narbsburg found dead on the beach. He was a psychiatrist. Was he up here to treat Constance? Did she kill him, too? Was your father able to cover that murder?"

Jo Tower Lang leaped to her feet.

"Or perhaps your brother killed Robin Morrison in a fit of anger. I hear he explodes."

Jo Tower Lang was at the door. She stared hard at the redhead, her lips drawn down tight.

"Okay, so maybe your husband is the killer. Maybe there was a little hanky-panky already going on between your husband and Robin Morrison. Maybe he didn't want her moving into Tower House. Maybe—"

Jo Tower Lang jerked open the door.

"Hey!" Shayne yelled.

She whirled.

"You're scared," he said flatly. "And you haven't told me why you came here. I'm going to dig, doll. Deep and hard. I'm going to turn up Robin Morrison's killer. I hope it isn't you."

"Mr. Shayne," she said, her voice quivering with anger, "Robin's killer already is in jail.

I suggest that you start your digging there."

"That's another little message you can take back to your father," the redhead said. "Oscar Morrison isn't going to be a patsy."

She disappeared with a slam of the door. Shayne sat for a couple of seconds and then went to the window. He pushed drapes aside, watched Joe Tower Lang get into a Mercedes. The car weaved as it went away from him. He let the drapes fall together, shook his head.

Why was she frightened? Was she afraid for someone in her family?

Or was she, herself, a killer?

On the other hand, was she—grasping for any straw of salvation—and Flynn—in speculation—right about Oscar Morrison? Had Oscar Morrison killed his former wife, come to a private detective in a scheme designed to project innocence?

He took his thoughts to the motel bar where he attempted to put everything together. Later he walked alone on the beach. Then he picked at a poor roast beef dinner in the motel dining room, finally returned to his room.

He was caught up in frustration. Outside, the early night was quiet. Inside, the only sound was the hum of the room.

air conditioner. The tranquility was foreign to his nature. He was a man of noise: voices, music, the sounds of the city. He was a man of action: threading through sidewalk crowds and street traffic, pushing through clusters of people, elbowing, badgering, returning lip service, charging into a brawl, making demands in a busy police headquarters, whipping out the .45, or using his fists, or grabbing up any handy club when confronted by physical violence. He was a demanding man who got swift answers or conceived them. He was a man who confronted, antagonized or forced. He bristled, shouted, slammed.

He was never a man who sat alone in a quiet motel room when involved in a murder case! He made things happen!

Except in a small town called Dondo Beach.

He went to the door, jerked it open. He stood staring outside into the darkness of the beach. There was shadowy, scattered movement down by the water, faint voices. He heard the gentle lapping of waves against the sand. He looked from one cluster of shadows to another, his eyes jerking. The clusters were difficult to accept. How could people be so at ease? Didn't they know they were living in a

world of speed and harshness? He went to the phone, jerked up the receiver, had Lucy Hamilton dialed in Miami. She hadn't seen or heard from Debbie Morrison.

And then she said "Michael?"

"Yeah?" he growled.

"Do you want me to drive up there and spend the night?" Lucy said.

He jerked. He held out the receiver and stared at it for a moment, and then he grinned. The grin kept spreading as he returned the receiver to his ear.

"Yeah," he said.

"Really?" Lucy sounded almost surprised.

"Naw, Angel," he chuckled. "I'm okay."

"Are you sure?" she asked, her voice very soft now.

"It's quiet here, that's all. Slow."

"Sometimes things go that way, Michael."

"Un-huh."

"Maybe you should come home."

"I think somebody is trying to make a patsy out of Oscar Morrison."

"I see. Well, then, I'll see you when you come through the office door."

"Un-huh."

"Patience can be rewarding, too, Michael."

"Thanks." He sat grinning

or a long time after he had put his phone together.

And the sound of gunshots sent him into a nosedive.

XI

SHAYNE threw his long body into a flat racing dive, reflexively breaking the plunge with his hands. He rolled into a wall, pawing the .45 free from his shoulder rig.

But suddenly he was surrounded by silence. It pressed on him like a heavy weight.

He didn't move a muscle as he trained the muzzle of the .45 on the door. Somebody was going to get his or her legs shot full of holes if the door opened.

But the door remained closed.

Four quick shots had been triggered. The shooter had fired in haste. Did that make him or her a novice? Not a pro, certainly. A pro would have—

Shayne remained hunched on the carpeting, the .45 trained on the door as a thought began to build. He looked at the draped window. There were slivers of glass on the carpeting and the drapes wiggled in a breeze. He saw a couple of bullet holes in the drapes and he scowled.

Then the voices came from somewhere on the beach. They were muted but they took on

stature quickly, became shouts and excited exclamations.

The redhead heard movement outside the door. He leveled the .45, his large finger taunt against the trigger. A slight squeeze and...

"Hey, in there! Anybody hurt?"

Shayne knew. It was no killer outside. Only a gutsy John Citizen.

"Hey, in there!"

Shayne yelled, "Yeah, everything's okay." He went to the drapes, yanked them apart, studied the shattered glass of the window, then examined the slug holes in the drapes. All of the holes were extremely high.

He grunted and jammed the .45 in its rig. The shots had been a warning. Only a warning. Nobody had wanted to kill him. Not really.

He heard the rattle of a key in the door lock. The door shot open. A small, bald man stood staring at him. Behind the man, two other faces gawked, eyes wide, excited and curious. Shayne knew the small man was the motel manager.

"Somebody shot out your window, pal," Shayne said simply.

"I've already called the police!" the manager gasped.

Shayne grunted. "What for? Nobody shot at them."

He waved the manager out.

of the room, then followed him outside. A small crowd had formed a U in front of the unit. The crowd backed in unison as Shayne waved his arms.

"Beat it," he snapped. "Excitement's over."

Which was exactly what Captain Flynn, when he arrived, wanted the detective to do: travel.

"Didn't you get the message?" Flynn asked.

The redhead snorted and tugged at his ear. "I don't scare, Flynn. If you think I'm hauling tail because of—"

"Go back to Miami, Shayne," Flynn said in a voice that had sharp edges. "We've got a bunch of innocent tourists around here and—"

"No dice," Shayne said, shaking his head. He paced the sand. "The shots came from out here somewhere, down near the water maybe," he said, waving vaguely. "That means the shooter was walking along, probably waited until no one else was around, then ripped off the four shots and cut. Somebody said they saw a guy running, right?"

"Yes."

"A guy," the redhead emphasized.

"Yes."

"Okay, so we can eliminate Jo Tower Lang."

Flynn said nothing.

"And Oscar Morrison. Assume he's still sitting in your cell."

"I don't think he's moved an inch all day."

"I want to hear some of the other Towers explain their whereabouts tonight."

"Shayne, you're not deaf. You're returning to Miami."

"Not a chance, pal. Nobody slings slugs my way and—"

"Do I have to arrest you?"

Shayne stopped pacing and stared at the police chief for a long time. He decided Flynn was serious. Flynn might try to make an arrest. Shayne debated briefly. He didn't need a beef with a top cop. He had too many other things to think about now. He grimaced.

"Okay," he said suddenly. "I don't like it, but I'll fly. But that doesn't mean I—"

"I know," Flynn said with a sigh. "You'll be back."

"Yeah."

"But give it a couple of days, will you? Let things around here settle a little."

"In your own sweet time you'll find a killer, huh?"

Flynn's voice hardened. "I have my way, Shayne. You have yours."

Shayne had no intention of leaving Dondo Beach. But he cleared out of the motel room, got into his car and headed down the Miami highway. When

e was sure Flynn was not
ailing him, he made a U turn
nd cruised back to the town
nd down into the dark parking
rea along the beach beyond
he Golden Sand high rise.

Staying in shadows, he
oved up to the apartment
uilding. The streets were
eserted and the night quietness
ad settled. He risked a look
nto the lighted lobby of the
uilding. It was empty. He
ntered quickly and stabbed the
utton to open the elevator
oor. Riding up, he got out the
ing of keys and selected what
e needed. The door to Robin
Morrison's apartment would be
o problem.

And a guy did need a place
o catch a few winks of sleep.

He snapped the door lock
nd pushed the door open.
amplight greeted him, the
singing voice of Frank Sinatra
illed his ears. He stood rooted,
is right hand halfway to his
shoulder rig until he saw Debbie
Morrison. She was barefooted,
ore faded blue jeans and a
ullover sweat shirt. She stood
ramed in the doorway of her
mother's bedroom, staring curi-
ously.

Finally she said, "You."

"And you," Shayne said,
entering the apartment and
kicking the door shut behind
him. "What the devil are you
doing here?"

"I live here, Mr. Shayne,"
she said simply. "Why can't I be
here?"

"You're supposed to be in
Miami."

She flippantly waved a hand,
went to a couch, curled a leg
nder her and flopped.

"Kid—"

"Mr. Shayne," she said. Her
voice had evened and her stare
hung on him. "What are you
doing here? You don't live
here."

He returned her stare before
he went to a chair. He lit a
cigarette, sent two streams of
smoke shooting from his
nostrils. There didn't seem to
be any reason he should lie to
her, so he said, "To tell you the
truth, Flynn tried to run me
out of town."

"Why?" she frowned.

He told her about the beach
sniping.

"Aren't you frightened?"

"No," he said flatly.

XII

D E B B I E M O R R I S O N
pondered him for a few
seconds, and then she left the
couch with a bounce. "I like
you, Mr. Shayne! You're not
afraid of anything. You can
stay here. Use my room. I'll
sleep in mother's bed. Do you
want a beer? I think she had
some in the refrigerator."

The detective shook his head. Debbie Morrison bothered him. She seemed so young, yet her mind and her emotions seemed far beyond her physical years. The prospect of sleeping in a bed where only two nights earlier her mother had been murdered apparently held no qualms for her. But perhaps he wasn't keeping up, perhaps he didn't understand the current crop of teens.

He butted his cigarette in an ashtray that still was filled with other butts and stood.

"I'll use the couch," he said. "Got an extra pillow?"

"Sure." She went into her bedroom, returned with a pillow, tossed it to him. Then she went into the kitchen and returned with a can of beer. She popped the top and dropped the tab inside the can. "Sure you don't want one?"

He was in the doorway of what had been Robin Morrison's bedroom. The room still was extremely neat. The bed looked freshly made and he could not find a wrinkle in the covering. The lamps that framed the head of the bed were on the low switch and the dull light made shadows out of far corners. The French doors were open. Sinatra sang. Only the incense and the candelabra were missing.

"Mr. Shayne?"

The girl's voice suddenly was very soft, and when he looked at her there was no expression on her face. But her eyes hung on him, and she did not blink as she stood with a shoulder against the frame of the kitchen entry, the can of beer seemingly forgotten in her hand.

"Mr. Shayne, what's going to happen to my father?" she asked.

Finally. The detective almost grunted. Finally Debbie Morrison had landed. Finally the enormity of the murder, the loss of her mother, her father being in jail was working on her. She even seemed a little frightened now.

"Nothing is going to happen to your father, Debbie," he said, returning to the couch. "I'll get him out of jail in the morning."

"How?"

"I'll post bond."

"But that doesn't make him a free man, does it? I mean, we can't just go away from here and forget all this, can we?"

"No, but—"

"That's what I want, Mr. Shayne," she interrupted. "I want to go away with him."

He debated briefly and decided to put it on the line. "Debbie, some people are speculating that your father killed your mother."

"Paul Tower killed her!"

"Maybe," Shayne nodded. Then he summarized Flynn's speculation for her. "And Flynn could have all of this pegged," he said carefully. "Your father could have—"

"No!" She shook her head doggedly. "The pig is wrong! Father didn't kill mother! Paul Tower did!"

She drank from the beer can, turned and, in anger, threw the can into the kitchen sink. When she whirled around again, her face was screwed up. "It can't be that way, Mr. Shayne, it just can't be!"

She let the words dribble off, stood for a few seconds chewing on her lower lip, then began to move around the front room of the apartment. She moved on quick steps, with no thought of direction or destination. Shayne captured her.

"Easy," he said in a gruff but gentle voice.

She stared up at him.

"If they take father from me, who will I have?" she asked in a tone that was just above a whisper. "Doctor Narnsburg said—"

Again she let the words dribble off. She shook her head.

Shayne was triggered. He struggled to keep his voice gentle. "Narnsburg said?"

"That I needed someone to lean on. That I always would need someone to lean on. A

mother, a father, a husband, a friend. Oh, it was a lot of garbage! I don't need anyone! I can take care of myself!"

She snapped out of the detective's grip, went to the chair and sat. She stared at the carpeting.

Shayne asked carefully, "Did you go to Narnsburg as a patient, Debbie?"

"God, no," she breathed, shaking her head again. "He and mother became acquainted. I don't know how, but I can guess. Mother liked men, any man. And he came up here to the apartment a couple of nights. I thought he was a creep. Especially after mother put him up to making a case history out of me. She thought it was funny. I thought it was a drag. But I gave him spooky answers to his crazy questions just so he'd get his kicks. Like I told him about drowning my cat. I really didn't drown my cat, but I told him I did."

"And he said?" Shayne prodded.

"Nothing." She shrugged. "He just looked at mother. But later I overheard him tell her I needed protection, someone to look out for me. I didn't understand it all, but I didn't care. I don't now."

"And then Narnsburg was killed."

"Yes," she nodded. "A

bunch of us went swimming one night. We went up the beach, to a place we know about up there, it's a place where nobody else goes. We go up there when we want to swim naked. Well, we went up there, and we found the man dead on the beach."

Shayne tugged at his ear. "Captain Flynn told me about it. He said Narnsburg was the kind of man who liked to walk alone in remote areas at night."

"He was creepy enough to want to do that," Debbie nodded.

"Flynn also told me he had trouble finding anyone in Dondo Beach who knew Doctor Narsnburg."

"I guess he didn't ask in the right places."

"It seems," said Shayne. "On the other hand, he asked your mother, but she passed the guy off as a casual beach acquaintance."

"She lied, didn't she?"

"She probably had a reason. Was she dating Paul Tower at the time she became acquainted with Narnsburg?"

"Some."

"Do you know if Tower and Narnsburg were aware of one another?"

"I don't think they were." She paused. "Of course, Paul could've found out about the shrink coming here. The build-

ing manager is another creep. He tells Paul everything."

"Do you think Tower might have killed Narnsburg? Maybe in anger."

"He could have," Debbie Morrison said slowly. Then she added, "He just might have."

Shayne lighted a fresh cigarette, his thought clicking.

"Debbie," he said, "the other day you mentioned a former girlfriend named Penny Harker who was killed in Miami. You—"

"She was murdered too!"

"I know," Shayne nodded.

"She really shook up this town!"

Shayne waited, said nothing. "Everybody here thought she was going to an airlines school, but she really was working in a skin club. I thought it was awfully funny when the town found out. For a couple of days nobody would believe it."

"Did you know what Penny was doing in Miami?" Shayne interrupted.

"Well, sure. But I didn't tell any of these creeps around here."

"How did you know?"

"Oh, man, girls tell girls things, don't you know? And besides, a couple of the guys from here were in Miami one night. They saw Penny."

"I wonder if Paul Tower ever just happened to run into her

down there?" the detective speculated.

"Huh?" Debbie Morrison stared at him.

"He'd know Penny on sight, wouldn't he?"

"Well, sure!"

She frowned. Shayne remained silent. Then she got up and walked around the room once. She shook her head a couple of times. It was as if she couldn't accept what she was thinking. Finally she stopped and looked straight at the redhead.

"Are you thinking that Paul Tower may have killed three people?" she asked.

"It's a possibility someone from Dondo Beach did," the detective nodded. He pulled hard on the cigarette. "But that's all it is at the moment. Just a possibility."

"Well, he could've known about Penny in Miami."

"How?" Shayne asked sharply.

"Louis Lang knew she was working in the club. He saw her one time. She told me. He promised her he wouldn't tell a soul here, but—"

"He could've told his brother-in-law," Shayne finished the thought for her.

"Why not?"

"Un-huh," the redhead nodded.

"He always did have a thing

for Penny. Even when she lived here."

"Who did? Lang or Tower?"

"Mr. Lang! He always pestered her. One night on the beach he caught her alone and he got half of her bathing suit off her before she got away from him."

"Lang attacked her?"

"No, he didn't *attack* her," Debbie sighed as if mildly disgusted with the detective. "He just wanted her to go swimming with him. You know, skin swimming. And he tried to take off her bathing suit while he was talking to her. Penny thought it was funny."

"Anyone else know about this?"

Debbie Morrison shrugged. "I don't know. Penny could've told some of the other kids, I suppose. She told me all about it, so why not tell some others?"

Shayne was thinking hard. A couple of things had clicked into place. "Did you ever tell your mother about Lang and Penny Harker on the beach?"

"Good Lord, no! Why would I?"

"But could she have known? Maybe she overhead Penny and you talking."

"She might've." The girl shrugged. "If she did know, she never said anything to me. But I don't see—"

"I think your mother may have held some kind of club over the Towers. It could explain a rent-free apartment, her replacing this Mrs. Cain at work. And maybe, just maybe, Lang and the Harker girl was that club."

"But nothing happened between them!"

"Don't hold out on me, Debbie. Did Lang sexually attack Penny Harker?"

"No!"

"Was Penny putting pressure on Lang? Could he have gone down to Miami and killed her?"

"No!"

"Could your mother have pressured him? Did Lang kill your mother?"

"No!"

"You're very positive."

"Well, it's just—" She cut off the words. She went to the French doors, opened them, stood staring out on the Atlantic. She stood for a long time. When she spoke again, her voice had softened. She said, "It could've happened just like you say. Mr. Lang forced Penny to—well, you know. And she told me about it. Mother could've overhead. And maybe Penny was blackmailing Mr. Lang. I don't know."

Shayne grunted and stood. "I think, doll, it is now time for us to get a good night's sleep."

She whirled from the bal-

cony. "But aren't you going to arrest Mr. Lang?"

"I don't arrest people, Debbie," he said patiently. "I just prove they committed a crime, let the police arrest them. And Lang isn't going anywhere. He has no intention of running. He'd be leaving too much here. Tower money."

"But—" She looked frustrated.

He grinned for her, attempted to put her at ease. "You try to get some sleep, doll. Meanwhile, I'll put on my skull cap and do some reasoning. Incidentally, do you mind if I do a little prowling here? I might turn up something concrete among your mother's personal things. "And in the morning we'll get your father out of jail."

She continued to frown for a moment and then she tried on a smile. "Okay, that sounds good to me, Mr. Shayne. Good night."

He watched her cross the living room and enter her bedroom. She closed the door softly behind her. He scowled then, lighted a new cigarette and began to pace.

Was Lang his man?

Thirty minutes later, he still hadn't decided. And he was tired of thinking, tired of Sinatra. He found the tape player. It was concealed in a

small wall niche. On the wall above the niche was a room switch. He flipped it. Sinatra came on stronger. He went to the doorway of what had been Robin Morrison's bedroom. Sinatra was fainter in the bedroom now. He snapped off the music.

Then he prowled expertly. When he found the cache of new candles and incense, he stood for a long time staring down on the drawer. There must have been forty candles in the drawer. Every color of a rainbow. He snapped the drawer shut, continued to dig. A checkbook was interesting. It showed a healthy account. There were two loose checks in the back of the book. Neither had been made out. He turned them over, found a continuous string of figures running from one check to another. The notations were: 1-9-500, 2-7-1000, 3-5-500. The notations continued.

At eight o'clock the next morning, the detective was waiting at the front door of Wedge Real Estate when employees began arriving for the day's work.

XIII

IRMA CAIN was a narrow, unattractive woman who had opinions about Robin Morrison

and the Towers but was determined to keep them festering inside.

"My opinions are my business, Mr. Shayne," she said emphatically.

Shayne showed her the notations on the two blank checks.

"Any idea what these might be?" he asked.

Irma Cain sniffed. "Looks like a bunch of gibberish to me."

"Not phone numbers, certainly."

"No."

"But perhaps dates," Shayne insisted.

"Dates?"

"1-9, 2-7, 3-5. They could be January 9, February 7, March 5."

"Could be."

"And they keep going."

"I can see that, yes."

"Now, these other figures: 500, 1000, 500. Could those figures represent dollars?"

"I don't know."

"You've been an accountant or bookkeeper for years. Right, Mrs. Cain?"

"Most of my life, yes," she told him.

"And I have a hunch you keep accurate books."

"My work never has been questioned."

"Not even when you were let out by the Towers."

"Not even."

"Could someone have been embezzling under your nose, Mrs. Cain?"

"Wh—at?"

"1-9-500. Could that be \$500 taken or missing on January 9? 2-7-1000. Could that be—"

She bent over the checks suddenly. "I don't believe—" she breathed.

Robin Morrison was working in your department. Could she have been embezzling and—

"I would have caught her! Well—"

"You're hesitant, Mrs. Cain."

"She *was* a clever woman."

"When did you post each month's business figures?"

"We had to be finished by the tenth of the following month. Sometimes that required working at night."

"And did Robin Morrison work with you?"

"Certainly! Everyone in the accounting department."

"Could Robin Morrison have discovered that someone else was embezzling, kept it a secret, posted books so that you would not discover the person?"

"Well, I suppose she *could* have."

"But you don't think it likely."

"I do not, Mr. Shayne."

"Thank you, Mrs. Cain."

When he arrived at City Hall, Shayne found Captain Flynn in a sour mood. Flynn looked up. "You didn't stay out of town long."

"I didn't leave town."

"Figures," Flynn grunted. "What do you want?"

"To post bond, if it's necessary, for Oscar Morrison."

"Forget it. He just confessed to the murder of his former wife. He said it happened just like I said it happened. He came up here Sunday night, looked things over, got Robin to let him inside the apartment after Paul Tower left Monday night, killed her, then beat it back to Miami and contacted you Tuesday morning."

"But he did take time to lay her out very neat and cozy, didn't he? You know, the incense, the—"

"You're sarcastic, Shayne. What's with you? Anyway, Morrison said all of that was going when she let him inside the apartment."

"I see. And Robin Morrison went back into the bedroom, stripped naked for her former husband, stretched out on the bed and let him strangle her with a bra. She didn't struggle an inch, did she? She didn't wrinkle a sheet or—"

"He says he fixed her up after."

"Why?"

"That he didn't tell me."

"You want to take a run out to Tower House with me?"

"What for?"

"To shoot down Morrison's confession."

R. Q. Tower was hostile, then blustery, but finally became depressed.

"It doesn't mean he killed Robin," he said, sounding as if he didn't believe his own words.

"She held a club, Tower," Shayne said.

"But not over him. And not over Paul. I don't think Paul knows about the embezzling. She held it over me. I don't get hoodwinked, Mr. Shayne. Not by anyone. And she knew it. Except that all of a sudden I had been. And by the man whom my daughter married. So Robin Morrison came to me."

"What did she ask?"

"Just what she got. Head of the accounting department at the firm, living expenses, and to be left alone with Paul, no pressure from my wife or myself to get Paul to reconsider Constance."

"You weren't going to let that kind of situation exist forever, Tower. You're not that kind."

"I've been running in place, Mr. Shayne. I wasn't sure what to do with her. I've been contemplating."

"Did you have her killed?"

"I repeat, no."

"And you didn't send anyone around to my motel room last night?"

"I heard about that, and I did not."

"Where's your son-in-law now?"

"Down at the boat dock with Jo, I think. But you're wrong about him, Mr. Shayne. He's a thief, but he is not a killer."

"Do you think your daughter knows about the embezzling?"

"I don't see how she could."

"She was very frightened about something when she came to me yesterday."

Louis and Jo Tower Lang seemed almost to be waiting for accusation. They showed no surprise at the arrival of Shayne and Flynn. They sat side by side on the boat dock, dangling bare feet in water. Neither offered a greeting nor bothered to get up. A small, portable radio between them gave off soft music.

"Okay, it was me, Shayne," Louis said. "I fired the shots. But I aimed high. I had no intention of hitting you."

"Thanks," Shayne said sourly.

"Someone saw me, I assume. Someone recognized me. That's why you're here."

The radio music ended. A

voice shattered, then announced the next number. Music returned.

"Have you got a nice little cache of greenbacks someplace, Louis?" Shayne asked.

"Jo won't believe me," he said, "but when the old man dies, when he is gone, when Paul has complete control, we will be out."

"That isn't true," the blonde woman said, shaking her head without looking up.

"So I was salting a little here and there for the future," Louis Lang said. "And then she caught on and began to take half each month."

"Enough reason to be rid of her, I guess," Shayne nodded. "Jo?"

Jo Tower Lang snapped around.

Shayne waited with shaggy eyebrows cocked. The radio music ended again and the announcer chattered.

"No," Jo Tower Lang said, "I didn't kill her. I've known for a long time that something wasn't right, but I thought—well, I thought Louis and Robin were—"

She stopped, chewed her lower lip. "It really doesn't make any difference what I thought, Mr. Shayne. I was wrong. Louis told me, just about five minutes before you walked up here."

"Did he also tell you about himself and a girl named Penny Harker?"

Lang jerked. "Hey!"

"Shall I lay it out, Lang, or do you want to?" Shayne said savagely.

"Man, there isn't anything to lay out!"

"What about on a beach one night? What about—"

"Me? On a beach with the Harker girl? Are you crazy? Do you know how old she was?"

Shayne said nothing.

"Hey, pal," Louis Lang said, standing suddenly, "somebody has been feeding you grass. What is this, me and the Harker girl?"

"Tell me you didn't know she was working in a Miami club."

"Club, hell! It was a pothole! Hell, yes, I knew! I wandered in there one night and there she was, the Harker girl, bouncing around half naked. What's this about me and that girl and a beach?"

The radio music ended again and the announcer was back. Shayne didn't listen to the words, but he suddenly became acutely aware of the change. He jerked in speculation. And then turned and stomped along the dock. Flynn captured his arm as they stepped on grass.

"What in the hell is going on?" he asked.

Shayne was deep in thought.
"Come on," he growled. "I'll lay it out as we drive."

They found Debbie Morrison sitting alone on the beach. They flanked her and sat. Shayne said, "The other day, Debbie, when I told you your mother had been killed, you described her bedroom to the nut. The incense, Sinatra, the candles—"

"Her room always was that way when men came around."

"Red candles, you said."

"Well, they were."

"Except that you also said you left the apartment around 6:30 in the evening and your mother wasn't in her bedroom then."

"I came down here to the beach. You can ask some of the other kids. They were here. They—"

"You didn't see your mother after you left at 6:30?"

"No. I told you that."

"So how did you know she burned red candles? I found various colored candles in a drawer."

"Well, red was her favorite color. I guess I assumed that—"

"And a Sinatra tape was playing when your father and I found your mother's body. Some tapes are long playing, of course, much longer than records played on a radio program, for instance, but they don't run forever. The tape in

the apartment has to be changed or restarted periodical-
ly. And it was around one
o'clock in the afternoon
when—"

"She was beautiful, wasn't
she, Mr. Shayne?"

The detective shot a significant glance at Flynn. Then he asked, "What did Doctor Narnsburg really tell your mother about you, Debbie?"

She remained silent for a long time. Finally she said, "That I like dead things."

"Like your drowned cat?"

"I didn't do that, Mr. Shayne. She just drowned all by herself."

"Or your dog that got hung up all by itself on a tree limb."

The girl remained silent.

"How 'bout your friend, Penny Harker?" Shayne asked gently.

"I went down to Miami to see her and she called me a creep," the girl said softly.

"Narnsburg?"

"He shouldn't have told my mother those terrible things about me."

"You followed him up the beach one night, killed him, then came back to your friends. Later, when everyone decided to go skinny dipping, you couldn't stop them so—" Shayne let it hang.

"I really didn't care if they found him."

"Why did you kill your mother, Debbie?" Shayne asked gently.

"I didn't like her...she was beautiful, wasn't she? Everything so in place. I sat and stared and looked at her for hours."

"Did you sit and look at Penny Harker too?"

"Well, sure."

OSCAR MORRISON wouldn't accept. He ranted and attempted to tear apart the Dondo Beach jail cell area. Then he wouldn't leave. He demanded to be put into the cell with his daughter. He sat on the bunk beside her, his arm across her

shoulders, cradling her as she cried softly.

A long time later Shayne sat morosely in front of Captain Flynn's desk.

"Morrison knew," Flynn said. "Somehow he figured it."

"So a confession," Shayne nodded.

Both men sat in silence for another several seconds. They stared. Depression was heavy in the office.

Finally Flynn said, "What did you call it, Shayne? You said it once."

"Necrophilism."

"I never heard of it."

"And I hope I never run across it again."

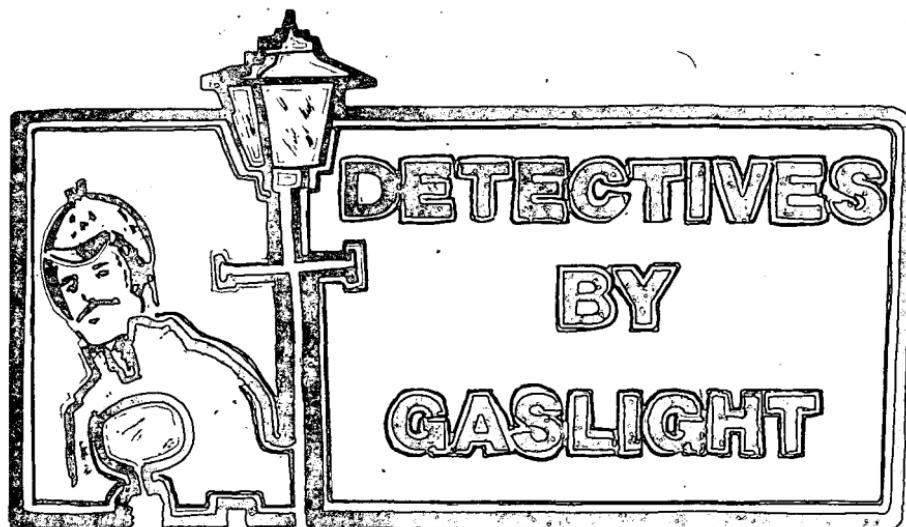
Read: In the NEXT issue of MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE:

DEATH IN THE CRYSTAL BALL

The New Complete MIKE SHAYNE Short Novel

by BRETT HALLIDAY

For many years the crystal ball before her had told strange tales of Life. Now it told a different tale—a tale of trackless Death her own! Follow Mike Shayne along the tangled, danger-ridden trail that led from a murdered charlatan's lair into the very core of Miami's Princess of Evil,—where every dark street bore the unspoken order, "Don't let Mike Shayne out of here alive." Get your copy now! It's one of famous Brett Halliday's very best thrillers!



The man who started it all—the man who practically invented the ubiquitous private eye—had his instantaneous imitators—fortunately for us, or, all of these extraordinary sleuths and their remarkable stories might have remained still-born. Success bred rivals, and Sherlock Holmes' contemporaries will pass through these pages, ably selected and scholarly introduced by SAM MOSKOWITZ. Famed friends will ride hansom cabs once again.

WHEN Arthur Conan Doyle sent Sherlock Holmes plummeting to his death in Switzerland's Reichenbach Falls in the November, 1893, issue of THE STRAND MAGAZINE, he left an adoring public outraged and his publisher squarely upon the horns of a seemingly hopeless dilemma. As the well-known magazine's circulation had soared since the appearance of the first Sherlock Holmes short story (*A Scandal in Bohemia*, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, July, 1891), something had to be done to fill the imminent deadly breach in its table of contents.

Doyle, a practicing physician as well as an aspiring author, killed off his master sleuth for the good and simple reason that he was sick unto death of Holmes, Dr. Watson and what he considered the monthly creation of hack plots beneath his literary

talents. He was anxious to devote his writing time to the more "serious" and "important" development of his historical novels.

Hence, he sent Holmes plunging into the cataract, locked in the deadly embrace of super-villain Dr. Moriarty, in *The Adventure of the Final Problem*—the twenty-fourth story in this remarkable series. And that, as far as the author was concerned, was that.

Ultimately, of course, Doyle was forced to bring Holmes back to fictional life in further scores of short stories and such novels as *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, by the insatiable demands of his readers for more Sherlock. But that took a bit of doing and considerable time. In the meanwhile, the publisher and editors of THE STRAND MAGAZINE desperately needed something to keep their Holmes-inflated circulation alive, and that something had to be in the form of a private investigator with some special qualifications for his role in successful albeit unofficial criminal research.

Since the narrator of the Holmes stories, like their real-life author, was a physician, the bumbling Dr. Watson, the editors not unnaturally continued the bedpan-and-stethoscope trend with a series entitled *Stories from the Diary of a Doctor* by L.T. Meade and Clifford Halifax. Apparently, the first attempt at a follow-up failed to catch on, for they quickly replaced it with another series character, Martin Hewitt, Investigator, by the younger and more talented Arthur Morrison.

The first Martin Hewitt story, *The Lenton Croft Robberies*, appeared in THE STRAND in the March, 1894, issue. Hewitt was an independent hawkshaw with legal training. He was the first successful successor to Sherlock Holmes in an era when the streets of London were still lighted by gas after dark and when a real-life Jack the Ripper successfully foiled Scotland Yard with his skilled if invariably fatal emergency operations on a series of hapless prostitutes in deep shadows the gaslight failed to dispel.

Needless to say, THE STRAND was not the only periodical that attempted to cash in on the profitable field of fictional private investigation whose financial floodgates were opened by Conan Doyle. In dozens of other periodicals and in bound hardcover volumes, other sleuths appeared in prodigious quantity, many of whom justly deserved the success they attained, some of

which have become what the popular music industry terms "standards," if not classics.

As nostalgic as the gaslights that lit up their nocturnal passages, many of them merit revival if only to reveal the fascinations of an era that died with the turn of the century. It is the intention of MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE to present for its readers each month a different private investigator who trod in the footsteps of Sherlock Holmes, bull's-eye lantern and magnifying glass in hand.

Some, like Martin Hewitt, may evoke recollection, but others will feature outstanding sleuths known to few, if any, of the researchers into this fascinating facet of crime-fiction memorabilia.

Coming up among others are Sir Edmund C. Cox's Indian detective, John Carruthers, a chapter of *From a Surgeon's Diary* by R. Austin Freeman, a tale from *The Burglar's Club* by Henry A. Hering, B. Fletcher Robinson's Inspector Hartley, an early creation of Sax Rohmer and even an extraordinary chapter from the series of *unsolved mysteries* by Ian McLaren.

This is a menu virtually guaranteed to titillate the literary palate of the mystery-story gourmet and the meat-and-potatoes crime-fiction buff alike. Enjoy it course by course in the forthcoming issues of MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE. Doing the literary detective work will be Sam Moskowitz, who for some years now has collected the magazine appearances of these early detectives. Moskowitz is best known as an outstanding authority on science fiction, but many may not be aware that he is a member of The Mystery Writers of America and that his book *The Man Who Called Himself Poe* (Doubleday) a collection of stories in which Edgar Allan Poe is the lead character in each, is a highly desirable item for the lovers of the mystery story.

Happy sleuthing!

LEO MARGULIES

Publisher

THE LENTON CROFT ROBBERIES

by ARTHUR MORRISON

SAM MOSKOWITZ

Introduces

MARTIN HEWITT, INVESTIGATOR

ARTHUR MORRISON is justly regarded by connoisseurs of the detective story as one of the most successful early imitators of *Sherlock Holmes*. His series of first-rate mysteries features *Martin Hewitt*, a legal clerk with a great facility for detail, who turns detective with extraordinary success.

Among serious students of British literature of the 19th century Morrison ranks high as one of the earliest exponents of stark realism in fiction with his *Tales of Mean Streets* published in 1894. This was a grim and

undiluted expose of the sordid and unhappy plight of the residents of East End London during that often unhappy era.

His move into the detective field was a fortuitous accident resulting from A. Conan Doyle killing off *Sherlock Holmes* in the 24th of a series of stories culminating in *THE STRAND MAGAZINE* in 1893. H. Greenough Smith, the editor, having failed to tempt Doyle back with pleas or money, asked Morrison to fill the gap. Morrison, who was contributing humor for the monthly pictor-

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THE STRAND MAGAZINE



ial feature Zig-Zags at the Zoo, reluctantly agreed to try his hand at a simulation of *Sherlock Holmes*. The result was rushed into print in the March, 1894, issue of *THE STRAND MAGAZINE* as Martin Hewitt, Investigator—The Lenton Croft Robberies. The *Sherlock Holmes* illustrator, Sidney Paget, was commissioned to adorn the text.

While not comparable with

Sherlock Holmes, the series caught on instantly and in the opinion of the last editor of *THE STRAND MAGAZINE*, Reginald Pound, Morrison was a superior stylist to Conan Doyle himself.

The first two series of Martin Hewitt stories ran in *THE STRAND MAGAZINE*, but Ward, Lock and Company, who had published both of them in hard covers, convinced Arthur

Morrison to run the third series in their *WINDSOR MAGAZINE*, where it began in the January, 1896, issue.

Morrison had worked for the Charity Commission of Civil Service, where he obtained the material for his works on the poor of London. In 1890 he resigned to gamble as a freelance writer, at first writing articles on cycling. He then joined the staff of the famous British magazine, *THE NATIONAL OBSERVER*, edited by W. E. Henley. He contributed an assortment of material for *MACMILLAN'S MAGAZINE*, an important publication of general interest, and to *TIT BITS*, a tabloid pot-pourri of human interest items.

He was fascinated by Japanese art, which he obtained by haunting the docks for ships from the Orient and bargaining

with souvenir-bearing seamen. This resulted in a two-volume study of Japanese art and the eventual sale of his collection to the British Museum for an amount great enough to retire on. He then took up collecting other works of art in all seriousness, ultimately owning works by Reynolds, Hogarth, Constable, Gainsborough and other masters.

During the early part of the century he collaborated on a number of plays, the most successful *That Brute Simmons* (1904), *The Dumb Cake* and *A Stroke of Business* (1907). He died in 1945, and without downgrading the quality of his books of realism, his plays or his art critiques, he probably is remembered most affectionately by detective and mystery story fans for his *Martin Hewitt* stories.

THE LENTON CROFT ROBBERIES

by ARTHUR MORRISON

THOSE WHO retain any memory of the great law cases of fifteen or twenty years back will remember, at least, the title of that extraordinary will case, "Bartley v. Bartley and others," which occupied the Probate Court for some weeks on end, and caused an amount of public

interest rarely accorded to any but the cases considered in the other division of the same court.

The case itself was noted for the large quantity of remarkable and unusual evidence presented by the plaintiff's side—evidence that took the

other party completely by surprise, and overthrew their case like a house of cards. The affair will, perhaps, be more readily recalled as the occasion of the sudden rise to eminence, in their profession, of Messrs. Crellan, Hunt, and Crellan, solicitors for the plaintiff—a result due entirely to the wonderful ability shown in this case of building up, apparently out of nothing, a smashing weight of irresistible evidence. The firm has since maintained—indeed, enhanced—the position it then won for itself, its name is familiar to everybody.

But there are not many of the outside public who know that the credit of the whole performance was primarily due to a young clerk in the employ of Messrs. Crellan, who had been given charge of the seemingly desperate task of collecting evidence in the case.

Martin Hewitt had, however, full credit and reward for his exploit from his firm and from their client, and more than one other firm of lawyers engaged in contentious work made good offers to entice Hewitt to change his employers. Instead, he conceived the idea of making a regular business of doing, on behalf of such clients as might retain him, similar work to that he had just done, with success, for Messrs. Crellan, Hunt, and

Crellan. This was the beginning of the private detective business of Martin Hewitt, and his action at that time has been completely justified by the successes he has since achieved.

* * * * *

AT THE HEAD of the first flight of a dingy staircase leading up from an ever-open portal in a street by the Strand stood a door, the dusty ground-glass upper panel of which carried in its centre the single word "*Hewitt*," while at its right hand lower corner, in smaller letters, "*Clerk's Office*" appeared.

On a morning when the clerks in the ground-floor offices had barely hung up their hats, a short, well-dressed young man, wearing spectacles, hastening to open the dusty door, ran into the arms of another man who suddenly issued from it.

"I beg pardon," the first said. "Is this Hewitt's Detective Agency Office?"

"Yes, I believe you will find it so," the other replied. He was a stoutish, clean-shaven man, of middle height, and of a cheerful, round countenance. "You'd better speak to the clerk."

In the little outer office the visitor was met by a sharp lad

with inky fingers, who presented him with a pen and a printed slip. The printed slip having been filled with the visitor's name and present business, and conveyed through an inner door, the lad reappeared with an invitation to the private office. There, behind a writing-table, sat the stoutish man himself, who had only just advised an appeal to the clerk.

"Good morning, Mr. Lloyd—Mr. Vernon Lloyd," he said, affably, looking again at the slip. "You'll excuse my care to start even with my visitors—I must, you know. You come from Sir James Norris, I see."

"Yes; I am his secretary. I have only to ask you to go straight to Lenton Croft at once, if you can, on very important business. Sir James would have wired, but had not your precise address. Can you go by the next train? Eleven-thirty is the first available from Paddington."

"Quite possibly. Do you know anything of the business?"

"It is a case of a robbery in the house, or, rather, I fancy, of several robberies. Jewelry has been stolen from rooms occupied by visitors to the Croft. The first case occurred some months ago—nearly a year ago, in fact. Last night there was another. But I think you had

better get the details on the spot. Sir James has told me to telegraph if you are coming, so that he may meet you himself at the station; and I must hurry, as his drive to the station will be rather a long one. I take it you will go, Mr. Hewitt? Twyford is the station."

"Yes, I shall come, and by the eleven-thirty. Are you going by that train yourself?"

"No, I have several things to attend to now I am in town. Good morning; I shall wire at once."

Martin Hewitt locked the drawer of his table and sent his clerk for a cab.

At Twyford Station, Sir James Norris was waiting with a dog-cart. Sir James was a tall, florid man of fifty or thereabout, known away from home as something of a county historian, and nearer his own parts as a great supporter of the hunt, and a gentleman much troubled with poachers. As soon as he and Hewitt had found one another, the baronet hurried the detective into his dog-cart.

"We've something over seven miles to drive," he said, "and I can tell you all about this wretched business as we go. That is why I came for you myself, and alone."

Hewitt nodded.

"I have sent for you, as

Lloyd probably told you, because of a robbery at my place last evening. It appears, as far as I can guess, to be one of three by the same hand, or by the same gang. Late yesterday afternoon—”

“Pardon me, Sir. James,” Hewitt interrupted, “but I think I must ask you to begin at the first robbery and tell me the whole tale in proper order. It makes things clearer, and sets them in their proper shape.”

“Very well. Eleven months ago, or thereabout, I had rather a large party of visitors, and among them Colonel Heath and Mrs. Heath—the lady being a relative of my own late wife. Colonel Heath has not been long retired, used to be political resident in an Indian native State. Mrs. Heath had rather a good stock of jewelry of one sort and another, about the most valuable piece being a bracelet set with a particularly fine pearl—quite an exceptional pearl, in fact—that had been one of a heap of presents from the Maharajah of his State when Heath left India.

“It was a very noticeable bracelet, the gold setting being a mere featherweight piece of native filigree work almost too fragile to trust on the wrist—and the pearl being, as I have said, of a size and quality not often seen.

Well, Heath and his wife arrived late one evening, and after lunch the following day, most of the men being off by themselves—shooting, I think—my daughter, my sister (who is very often down here), and Mrs. Heath took it into their heads to go walking—fern-hunting, and so on. My sister was rather long dressing, and while they waited, my daughter went into Mrs. Heath’s room, where Mrs. Heath turned over all her treasures to show her—as women do, you know. When my sister was at last ready they came straight away, leaving the things littering about the room rather than stay longer to pack them up. The bracelet, with other things, was on the dressing-table then.”

“One moment. As to the door?”

“They locked it. As they came away my daughter suggested turning the key, as we had one or two new servants about.”

“And the window?”

“That they left open, as I was going to tell you. Well, they went on their walk and came back, with Lloyd—whom they had met somewhere—carrying their ferns for them. It was dusk and almost dinner time. Mrs. Heath went straight to her room, and the bracelet was gone.”

"Was the room disturbed?"

"Not a bit. Everything was precisely where it had been left, except the bracelet. The door hadn't been tampered with, but of course the window was open, as I have told you."

"You called the police, of course?"

"Yes, and had a man from Scotland Yard down in the morning. He seemed a smart fellow, and the first thing he noticed on the dressing-table, within an inch or two of where the bracelet had been, was a match, which had been lit and thrown down. Now, nobody about the house had had occasion to use a match in that room that day, and, if they had, certainly wouldn't have thrown it on the dressing table. So that, presuming the thief to have used that match, the robbery must have been committed when the room was getting dark—immediately before Mrs. Heath returned, in fact. The thief had evidently struck the match, passed it hurriedly over the various trinkets lying about, and taken the most valuable."

"Nothing else was even moved?"

"Nothing at all. Then the thief must have escaped by the window, although it was not quite clear how. The walking party approached the house with a full view of the window,

but saw nothing, although the robbery must have been actually taking place a moment or two before they turned up.

"There was no water-pipe within any practicable distance of the window. But a ladder usually kept in the stable-yard was found lying along the edge of the lawn. The gardener explained, however, that he had put the ladder there after using it himself early in the afternoon."

"Of course, it might easily have been used again after that and put back."

"Just what the Scotland Yard man said. He was pretty sharp, too, on the gardener, but very soon decided that he knew nothing of it. No stranger had been seen in the neighbourhood, nor had passed the lodge gates. Besides, as the detective said, it scarcely seemed the work of a stranger. A stranger could scarcely have known enough to go straight to the room where a lady—only arrived the day before—had left a valuable jewel, and away again without being seen. So all the people about the house were suspected in turn. The servants offered, in a body, to have their boxes searched, and this was done; everything was turned over, from the butler's to the new kitchenmaid's. I don't know that I should have had

this carried quite so far if I had been the loser myself, but it was my guest, and I was in such a horrible position.

"Well, there's little more to be said about that, unfortunately. Nothing came of it all, and the thing's as great a mystery now as ever. I believe the Scotland Yard man got as far as suspecting *me* before he gave it up altogether, but give it up he did in the end. I think that's all I know about the first robbery. Is it clear?"

"Oh, yes; I shall probably want to ask a few questions when I have seen the place, but they can wait. What next?"

"Well," Sir James pursued, "the next was a trumpery affair, that I should have forgotten all about, probably, if it hadn't been for one circumstance. Even now I hardly think it could have been the work of the same hand. Four months or thereabout after Mrs. Heath's disaster—in February of this year, in fact—Mrs. Armitage, a young widow, who had been a schoolfellow of my daughter's, stayed with us for a week or so. The girls don't trouble about the London season, you know, and I have no town house, so they were glad to have their old friend here for a little in the dull time.

"Mrs. Armitage is a very active young lady, and was

scarcely in the house half an hour before she arranged a drive in a pony-cart with Eva—my daughter—to look up old people in the village that she used to know before she was married. So they set off in the afternoon, and made such a round of it that they were late for dinner. Mrs. Armitage had a small plain gold brooch—not at all valuable, you know; two or three pounds, I suppose—which she used to pin up a cloak or anything of that sort. Before she went out she stuck this in the pincushion on her dressing-table, and left a ring—rather a good one, I believe—lying close by."

"This," asked Hewitt, "was not in the room that Mrs. Heath had occupied, I take it?"

"No; this was in another part of the building. Well, the brooch went—taken, evidently, by someone in a deuce of a hurry, for when Mrs. Armitage got back to her room, there was the pincushion with a little tear in it, where the brooch had been simply snatched off. But the curious thing was that the ring—worth a dozen of the brooch—was left where it had been put. Mrs. Armitage didn't remember whether or not she had locked the door herself, although she found it locked when she returned. But my niece, who was indoors all the

time, went and tried it once—because she remembered that a gasfitter was at work on the landing near by—and found it safely locked. The gasfitter, whom we didn't know at the time, but who since seems to be quite an honest fellow, was ready to swear that nobody but my niece had been to the door while he was in sight of it—which was almost all the time.

"As to the window, the sash-line had broken that very morning, and Mrs. Armitage had propped open the bottom half about eight or ten inches with a brush; and when she returned, that brush, sash and all, were exactly as she had left them. Now, I scarcely need tell you what an awkward job it must have been for anybody to get noiselessly in at that unsupported window; and how unlikely he would have been to replace it, with the brush, exactly as he found it."

"Just so. I suppose the brooch was really gone? I mean, there was no chance of Mrs. Armitage having mislaid it?"

"Oh, none at all. There was a most careful search."

"Then, as to getting in at the window, would it have been easy?"

"Well, yes," Sir. James replied; "yes, perhaps it would. It is a first-floor window and it

looks over the roof and skylight of the billiard-room. I built the billiard-room myself—built it out from a smoking-room just at this corner. It would be easy enough to get at the window from the billiard-room roof. But, then," he added, "that couldn't have been the way. Somebody or other was in the billiard-room the whole time, and nobody could have got over the roof—which is nearly all skylight—without being seen and heard. I was there myself for an hour or two, taking a little practice."

"Well, was anything done?"

"Strict inquiry was made among the servants, of course, but nothing came of it. It was such a small matter that Mrs. Armitage wouldn't hear of my calling in the police or anything of that sort, although I felt pretty certain that there must be a dishonest servant about somewhere. A servant might take a plain brooch, you know, who would feel afraid of a valuable ring, the loss of which would be made a greater matter of."

"Well, yes—perhaps so, in the case of an inexperienced thief, who also would be likely to snatch up whatever she took in a hurry. But I'm doubtful. What made you connect these two robberies together?"

"Nothing—whatever—for

some months. They seemed quite of a different sort. But scarcely more than a month ago I met Mrs. Armitage at Brighton, and we talked, among other things, of the previous robbery—that of Mrs. Heath's bracelet. I described the circumstances pretty minutely, and when I mentioned the match found on the table she said, 'How strange! Why, *my* thief left a match on the dressing-table when he took *my* little brooch!'

Hewitt nodded. "Yes," he said. "A spent match, of course?" "Yes, of course, a spent match. She noticed it, lying close by the pincushion, but threw it away without mentioning the circumstance. Still, it seemed rather curious to me that a match should be lit and dropped, in each case, on the dressing-cover an inch from where the article was taken. I mentioned it to Lloyd when I got back, and he agreed that it seemed significant."

"Scarcely," said Hewitt, shaking his head. "Scarcely, so far, to be called significant, although worth following up. Everybody uses matches in the dark, you know."

"Well, at any rate, the coincidence appealed to me so far that it struck me it might be worth while to describe the

brooch to the police in order that they could trace it if it had been pawned. They had tried that, of course, over the bracelet, without any result, but I fancied the shot might be worth making, and might possibly lead us on the track of the more serious robbery."

"Quite so. It was the right thing to do. Well?"

"Well, they found it. A woman had pawned it in London—at a shop in Chelsea. But that was some time before, and the pawnbroker had clean forgotten all about the woman's appearance. The name and address she gave were false. So that was the end of that business."

"Had any of your servants left you between the time the brooch was lost and the date of the pawn-ticket?"

"No."

"Were all your servants at home on the day the brooch was pawned?"

"Oh, yes. I made that inquiry myself."

"Very good. What happened next?"

"Yesterday, and this is what made me send for you. My late wife's sister came here last Tuesday, and we gave her the room from which Mrs. Heath lost her bracelet. She had with her a very old-fashioned brooch, containing a miniature

of her father, and set, in front, with three very fine brilliants and a few smaller stones. Here we are, though, at the Croft; I'll tell you the rest indoors."

Hewitt laid his hand on the baronet's arm.

"Don't pull up, Sir James," he said. "Drive a little further. I should like to have a general idea of the whole case before we go on."

"Very good." Sir James Norris straightened the horse's head again and went on. "Late yesterday afternoon, as my sister-in-law was changing her dress, she left her room for a moment to speak to my daughter in her room, almost adjoining. She was gone no more than three minutes, or five at most, but on her return the brooch, which had been left on the table, had gone! Now, the window was shut fast, and had not been tampered with. Of course, the door was open, but so was my daughter's, and anybody walking near must have been heard! But the strangest circumstance, and one that almost makes me wonder whether I have been awake to-day or not, was that there lay a used match on the very spot, as nearly as possible, where the brooch had been—and it was broad daylight!"

Hewitt rubbed his nose and looked thoughtfully before

him. "Um—curious, certainly," he said. "Anything else?" "Nothing more than you shall see for yourself. I have had the room locked, and watched till you could examine it. My sister-in-law had heard of your name, and suggested that you should be called in; so, of course, I did, exactly as she wanted. That she should have lost that brooch, of all things, in my house, is most unfortunate; you see, there was some small difference about the thing between my late wife and her sister when their mother died and left it."

"It's almost worse than the Heath's bracelet business, and altogether I'm not pleased with things, I can assure you! See what a position it is for me! Here are three ladies in the space of one year, robbed one after another in this mysterious fashion in my house, and I can't find the thief! It's horrible! People will be afraid to come near the place! And I can do nothing!"

"Ah, well—we'll see. Perhaps we had better turn back now. By-the-by, were you thinking of having any kind of alterations or additions made to your house?"

"No. What makes you ask?" "I think you might at least consider the question of painting and decorating," Sir James

or say, putting up another coachhouse, or something. Because I should like to be (to the servants) the architect—or the builder, if you please—come to look round. You haven't told any of them about this business?"

"Not a word. Nobody knows but my relatives and Lloyd. I took every precaution myself, at once. As to your little disguise, be the architect, by all means, and do as you please. If you can only find this thief and put an end to this horrible state of affairs, you'll do me the greatest service I've ever asked for—and as to your fee, I'll gladly make it whatever is usual, and three hundred in addition."

Martin Hewitt bowed. "You're very generous, Sir James, and you may be sure I'll do what I can. As a professional man, of course, a good fee always stimulates my interest, although this case of yours certainly seems interesting enough by itself."

"Most extraordinary! Don't you think so? Here are three persons, all ladies, all in my house, two even in the same room, even successively robbed of a piece of jewelry, each from a dressing-table, and a used match left behind in every case. All in the most difficult—one would say impossible—

circumstances for a thief, and yet there is no clue!"

"Well, we won't say that just yet, Sir James; we must see. And we must guard against any undue predisposition to consider the robberies in a lump. Here we are at the lodge gate again. Is that your gardener—the man who left the ladder by the lawn on the first occasion you spoke of?" Hewitt nodded in the direction of a man who was clipping a box border.

"Yes; will you ask him anything?"

"No, no; at any rate, not now. Remember the building alterations. I think, if there is no objection, I will look first at the room that the lady—Mrs.—?" Hewitt looked up inquiringly.

"My sister-in-law? Mrs. Cazenove. Oh, yes, you shall come to her room at once."

"Thank you. And I think Mrs. Cazenove had better be there."

They alighted; and a boy from the lodge led the horse and dog-cart away.

Mrs. Cazenove was a thin and faded, but quick and energetic, lady of middle age. She bent her head very slightly on learning Martin Hewitt's name, and said: "I must thank you, Mr. Hewitt, for your very prompt attention. I need scarcely say that any help you

can afford in tracing the thief who has my property—whoever it may be—will make me most grateful. My room is quite ready for you to examine."

The room was on the second floor—the top floor at that part of the building. Some slight confusion of small articles of dress was observable in parts of the room.

"This, I take it," inquired Hewitt, "is exactly as it was at the time the brooch was missed?"

"Precisely," Mrs. Cazenove answered. "I have used another room, and put myself to some other inconveniences, to avoid any disturbance."

Hewitt stood before the dressing-table. "Then this is the used match," he observed, "exactly where it was found?"

"Yes."

"Where was the brooch?"

"I should say almost on the very same spot. Certainly no more than a very few inches away."

Hewitt examined the match closely. "It is burnt very little," he remarked. "It would appear to have gone out at once. Could you hear it struck?"

"I heard nothing whatever; absolutely nothing."

"If you will step into Miss Norris's room now for a moment," Hewitt suggested, "we will try an experiment. Tell

me if you hear matches struck, and how many. Where is the match-stand?"

The match stand proved to be empty, but matches were found in Miss Norris's room, and the test was made. Each striking could be heard distinctly, even with one of the doors pushed to.

"Both your own door and Miss Norris's were open, I understand; the window shut and fastened inside as it is now, and nothing but the brooch was disturbed?"

"Yes, that was so."

"Thank you, Mrs. Cazenove. I don't think I need trouble you any further just at present. I think, Sir James," Hewitt added, turning to the baronet who was standing by the door, "I think, Sir James will see the other room and take a walk outside the house, if you please. I suppose, by-the-bye, that there is no getting at the matches left behind on the first and second occasions?"

"No," Sir James answered. "Certainly not here. The Scotland Yard man may have kept his."

The room that Mrs. Armitage had occupied presented no peculiar feature. A few feet below the window the roof of the billiard-room was visible, consisting largely of skylight. Hewitt glanced casually about

the walls, ascertained that the furniture and hangings had not been materially changed since the second robbery, and expressed his desire to see the windows from the outside. Before leaving the room, however, he wished to know the names of any persons who were known to have been about the house on the occasions of all three robberies.

"Just carry your mind back, Sir James," he said. "Begin with yourself, for instance. Where were you at these times?"

"When Mrs. Heath lost her bracelet I was in Tagley Wood all the afternoon. When Mrs. Armitage was robbed, I believe I was somewhere about the place most of the time she was out. Yesterday I was down at the farm." Sir James's face broadened. "I don't know whether you call those suspicious movements?" he added, and laughed.

"Not at all; I only asked you so that, remembering your own movements, you might the better recall those of the rest of the household. Was anybody, to your knowledge—*anybody*, mind—in the house on all three occasions?"

"Well, you know, it's quite impossible to answer for all the servants. You'll only get that by direct questioning—I can't possibly remember things of that

sort. As to the family and visitors—why, you don't suspect any of them, do you?"

"I don't suspect a soul, Sir James," Hewitt answered, beaming genially. "You see, I can't suspect people till I know something about where they were. It's quite possible there will be independent evidence enough as it is, but you must help me if you can. The visitors, now. Was there any visitor here each time—or even on the first and last occasions only?"

"No—not one. And my own sister, perhaps you will be pleased to know, was only there at the time of the first robbery."

"Just so. And your daughter, as I have gathered, was clearly absent from the spot each time—indeed, was in company with the party robbed. Your niece, now?"

"Why, hang it all, Mr. Hewitt, I can't talk of my niece as a suspected criminal. The girl's under my protection, and I really can't allow—"

Hewitt raised his hand and shook his head deprecatingly.

"My dear sir, haven't I said that I don't suspect a soul? Do let me know how the people were distributed, as nearly as possible. Let me see. It was your niece, I think, who found that Mrs. Armitage's door was locked—this door in fact—on

the day she lost her brooch?"

"Yes, it was."

"Just so—at the time when Mrs. Armitage, herself, had forgotten whether she locked it or not. And yesterday, was she out then?"

"No, I think not. Indeed, she goes out very little—her health is usually bad. She was indoors, too, at the time of the Heath robbery, since you ask. But come, now, I don't like this. It's ridiculous to suppose that *she* knows anything of it."

"I don't suppose it, as I have said. I am only asking for information. That is all your resident family, I take it, and you know nothing of anybody else's movements—except, perhaps, Mr. Lloyd's?"

"Lloyd? Well, you know yourself that he was out with the ladies when the first robbery took place. As to the others, I don't remember. Yesterday he was probably in his room, writing. I think that *he* acquits *him*, eh?" Sir James looked quizzically into the broad face of the affable detective, who smiled and replied:

"Oh, of course, nobody can be in two places at once, else what would become of the *alibi* as an institution? But as I have said, I am only setting my facts in order. Now, you see, we get down to the servants—unless

some stranger is in the party wanted. Shall we go outside now?"

Lenton Croft was a large, desultory sort of house, nowhere more than three floors high, and mostly only two. It had been added to bit by bit till it zig-zagged about its site, as Sir James Norris expressed it, "like a game of dominoes."

Hewitt scrutinized its external features carefully as they strolled round, and stopped some little while before the windows of the two bedrooms he had just seen from the inside. Presently they approached the stables and coach-house, where a groom was washing the wheels of the dog-cart.

"Do you mind my smoking?" Hewitt asked Sir James. "Perhaps you will take a cigar yourself—they are not so bad, I think. I will ask your man for a light."

Sir James felt for his own match-box, but Hewitt had gone, and was lighting his cigar with a match from a box handed him by the groom. A smart little terrier was trotting about by the coach-house, and Hewitt stooped to rub its head. Then he made some observations about the dog, which enlisted the groom's interest, and was soon absorbed in a chat with the man. Sir James, waiting a little way off, tapped the stones

rather impatiently with his foot, and presently moved away.

For full a quarter of an hour Hewitt chatted with the groom, and when at last he came away and overtook Sir James, that gentleman was about reentering the house.

"I beg your pardon, Sir James," Hewitt said, "for leaving you in that unceremonious fashion to talk to your groom, but a dog, Sir James—a good dog—will draw me anywhere."

"Oh," replied Sir James, shortly.

"There is one other thing," Hewitt went on, disregarding the other's curtness, "that I should like to know: There are two windows directly below that of the room occupied yesterday by Mrs. Cazenove—one on each floor. What rooms do they light?"

"That on the ground floor is the morning-room; the other is Mr. Lloyd's—my secretary. A sort of study or sitting-room."

"Now, you will see at once, Sir James," Hewitt pursued, with an affable determination to win the baronet back to good humour, "you will see at once that if a ladder had been used in Mrs. Heath's case, anybody looking from either of these rooms would have seen it."

"Of course. The Scotland Yard man questioned everybody as to that, but nobody seemed to have been in either of the rooms when the thing occurred; at any rate, nobody saw anything."

"Still, I think I should like to look out of those windows myself; it will, at least, give me an idea of what *was* in view and what was not, if anybody had been there."

Sir James Norris led the way to the morning-room. As they reached the door, a young lady, carrying a book and walking very languidly, came out. Hewitt stepped aside to let her pass, and afterwards said, interrogatively: "Miss Norris—your daughter, Sir John?"

"No, my niece. Do you want to ask her anything? Dora, my dear," Sir James added, following her in the corridor, "this is Mr. Hewitt, who is investigating these wretched robberies for me. I think he would like to hear if you remember anything happening at any of the three times."

The lady bowed slightly, and said: "I, uncle? Really, I don't remember anything; nothing at all."

"You found Mrs. Armitage's door locked, I believe," asked Hewitt, "when you tried it, on the afternoon when she lost her brooch?"

"Oh, yes; I believe it was locked. Yes, it was."

"Had the key been left in?"

"The key? Oh, no! I think not; no."

"Do you remember anything out of the common happening—anything whatever, no matter how trivial—on the day Mrs. Heath lost her bracelet?"

"No, really I don't. I can't remember at all."

"Nor yesterday?"

"No, nothing. I don't remember anything."

"Thank you," said Hewitt, hastily; "thank you. Now the morning-room, Sir James."

In the morning-room Hewitt stayed but a few seconds, doing little more than casually glance out of the windows. In the room above he took a little longer time. It was a comfortable room, but with rather effeminate indications about its contents. Little pieces of draped silk-work hung about the furniture, and Japanese silk fans decorated the mantelpiece. Near the window was a cage containing a grey parrot, and the writing-table was decorated with two vases of flowers.

"Lloyd makes himself pretty comfortable, eh?" Sir James observed. "But it isn't likely anybody would be here while he was out, at the time that bracelet went."

"No," replied Hewitt, medi-

tatively. "No, I suppose not."

He stared thoughtfully out of the window, and then, still deep in thought, rattled at the wires of the cage with a quill tooth-pick and played a moment with the parrot. Then looking up at the window again, he said: "That is Mr. Lloyd, isn't it, coming back in a fly?"

"Yes, I think so. Is there anything else you would care to see here?"

"No, thank you," Hewitt replied; "I don't think there is."

They went down to the smoking-room, and Sir James went away to speak to his secretary. When he returned, Hewitt said, quietly, "I think, Sir James—I *think* that I shall be able to give you your thief presently."

"What! Who do you think? I began to believe you were hopelessly stumped."

"Well, yes. I have rather a good clue, although I can't tell you much about it just yet. But it is so good a clue that I should like to know now whether you are definitely determined to prosecute, when you have the criminal?"

"Why, bless me, of course," Sir James replied, with surprise. "It doesn't rest with me, you know—the property belongs to my friends. And even if *they* were disposed to let the thing slide, I shouldn't allow it—I

‘couldn’t, after they had been robbed in my house.’”

“Of course, of course. Then, if I can, I should like to send a message to Twyford by somebody perfectly trustworthy—not a servant. Could anybody go?”

“Well, there’s Lloyd, although he’s only just back from his journey. But if it’s important, he’ll go.”

“It is important. The fact is, we must have a policeman or two here this evening, and I’d like Mr. Lloyd to fetch them without telling anybody else.”

Sir James rang, and, in response to his message, Mr. Lloyd appeared. While Sir James gave his secretary his instructions, Hewitt strolled to the door of the smoking-room, and intercepted the latter as he came out.

“I’m sorry to give you this trouble, Mr. Lloyd,” he said, “but I must stay here myself for a little, and somebody who can be trusted must go. Will you bring back a police-constable with you?—or rather two—two would be better. That is all that is wanted. You won’t let the servants know, will you? Of course, there will be a female searcher at the Twyford police-station? Ah—of course. Well, you needn’t bring her, you know. That sort of thing is done at the station.” And

chatting thus confidentially, Martin Hewitt saw him off

When Hewitt returned to the smoking-room Sir James said, suddenly, “Why, bless my soul, Mr. Hewitt, we haven’t fed you! I’m awfully sorry. We came in rather late for lunch, you know, and this business has bothered me so, I clean forgot everything else. There’s no dinner till seven, so you’d better let me give you something now. I’m really sorry. Come along.”

“Thank you, Sir James,” Hewitt replied; “I won’t take much. A few biscuits, perhaps, or something of that sort. And, by-the-bye, if you don’t mind, I rather think I should like to take it alone. The fact is, I want to go over this case thoroughly by myself. Can you put me in a room?”

“Any room you like. Where will you go? The dining-room’s rather large, but there’s my study, that’s pretty snug, or—”

“Perhaps I can go into Mr. Lloyd’s room for half an hour or so. I don’t think he’ll mind, and it’s pretty comfortable.”

“Certainly, if you’d like. I’ll tell them to send you whatever they’ve got.”

“Thank you very much. Perhaps they’ll also send me a lump of sugar and a walnut—it’s—it’s just a little fad of mine.”

“A what? A lump of sugar

and a walnut?" Sir James stopped for a moment, with his hand on the bell-rope. "Oh, certainly, if you'd like it; certainly," he added, and stared after this detective of curious tastes as he left the room.

When the vehicle, bringing back the secretary and the policemen, drew up on the drive, Martin Hewitt left the room on the first floor and proceeded downstairs. On the landing he met Sir James Norris and Mrs. Cazenove, who stared with astonishment on perceiving that the detective carried in his hand the parrot-cage.

"I think our business is about brought to a head now," Hewitt remarked on the stairs. "Here are the police-officers from Twyford."

The men were standing in the hall with Mr. Lloyd, who, on catching sight of the cage in Hewitt's hand, paled suddenly.

"This is the person who will be charged, I think," Hewitt pursued, addressing the officers, and indicating Lloyd with his finger.

"What, Lloyd?" gasped Sir James, aghast. "No—not Lloyd—nonsense!"

"He doesn't seem to think it nonsense himself, does he?" Hewitt placidly observed.

Lloyd had sunk on a chair, and, grey of face, was staring blindly at the man he had run

against at the office door that morning. His lips moved in spasms, but there was no sound. The wilted flower fell from his button-hole to the floor, but he did not move.

"This is his accomplice," Hewitt went on, placing the parrot and cage on the hall table, "though I doubt whether there will be any use in charging him. Eh, Polly?"

The parrot puts its head aside and chuckled. "Hullo, Polly!" it quietly gurgled. "Come along!"

Sir James Norris was hopelessly bewildered. "Lloyd—Lloyd—" he said, under his breath, "Lloyd—and that!"

"This was his little messenger," Hewitt explained, tapping the cage complacently; "in fact, the actual lifter. Hold him up."

The last remark referred to the wretched Lloyd, who had fallen forward with something between a sob and a loud sigh. The policemen took him by the arms and propped him in his chair.

MARTIN HEWITT said, with a shrug of the shoulders an hour or two after, in Sir James's study. "I can't say I have a system. I call it nothing but common-sense and a sharp pair of eyes. Nobody using these could help taking the right road in this case. I began at the

match, just as the Scotland Yard man did, but I had the advantage of taking a line through three cases. To begin with, it was plain that that match, being left there in daylight, in Mrs. Cazenove's room, could not have been used to light the table-top, in the full glare of the window. Therefore it had been used for some other purpose—*what* purpose I could not, at the moment, guess. Habitual thieves, you know, often have curious superstitions, and some will never take anything without leaving something behind—a pebble or a piece of coal, or something like that—in the premises they have been robbing. It seemed at first extremely likely that this was a case of that kind. The match had clearly been *brought in*—because when I asked for matches there were none in the stand—not even an empty box; and the room had not been disturbed.

"Also the match probably had not been struck there, nothing having been heard, although, of course, a mistake in this matter was just possible. This match then, it was fair to assume, had been lit somewhere else and blown out immediately—I remarked at the time that it was very little burnt. Plainly it could not have been treated thus for nothing, and the only

possible object would have been to prevent it igniting accidentally. Following on this it became obvious that the match was used, for whatever purpose, not as a match, but merely as a convenient splinter of wood.

"So far so good. But on examining the match very closely I observed—as you can see for yourself—certain rather sharp indentations in the wood. They are very small, you see, and scarcely visible, except upon narrow inspection; but there they are, and their positions are regular. See—there are two on each side, each opposite the corresponding mark of the other pair. The match, in fact, would seem to have been gripped in some fairly sharp instrument, holding it at two points above, and two below—an instrument, as it may at once strike you, not unlike the beak of a bird.

"Now, here was an idea. What living creature but a bird could possibly have entered Mrs. Heath's window without a ladder—supposing no ladder to have been used—or could have got into Mrs. Armitage's window without lifting the sash higher than the eight or ten inches it was already open? Plainly, nothing. Further, it is significant that only *one* article was stolen at a time, although others were about. A human

being could have carried any reasonable number, but a bird could only take one at a time. But why should a bird carry a match in its beak? Certainly it must have been trained to do that for a purpose, and a little consideration made that purpose probably betray itself at once. Therefore it must be trained to keep quiet both while going for and coming away with its plunder. What readier or more probably effectual way than, while teaching it to carry without dropping, to teach it also to keep quiet while carrying? The one thing would practically cover the other.

"I thought at once, of course, of a jackdaw or a magpie—these birds' thievish reputations made the guess natural. But the marks on the match were much too wide apart to have been made by the beak of either. I conjectured, therefore, that it must be a raven. So that when we arrived near the coach-house I seized the opportunity of a little chat with your groom on the subject of dogs and pets in general, and ascertained that there was no tame raven in the place. I also, incidentally, by getting a light from the coach-house box of matches, ascertained that the match found was of the sort generally used about the estab-

lishment—the large, thick, red-topped English match."

"But I further found that Lloyd had a parrot which was a most intelligent pet, and had been trained into comparative quietness—for a parrot. Also, I learnt that more than once the groom had met Mr. Lloyd carrying his parrot under his coat—it having, as its owner explained, learnt the trick of opening its cage-door, and escaping.

"I said nothing, of course, to you of all this, because I had as yet nothing but a train of arguments and no results. I got to Lloyd's room as soon as possible. My chief object in going there was achieved when I played with the parrot, and induced it to bite a quill tooth-pick.

"When you left me in the smoking-room I compared the quill and the match very carefully, and found that the marks corresponded exactly. After this I felt very little doubt indeed. The fact of Lloyd having met the ladies walking before dark on the day of the first robbery proved nothing, because, since it was clear that the match had *not* been used to procure a light, the robbery might as easily have taken place in daylight as not—must have so taken place, in fact, if my conjectures were right. That

they were right I felt no doubt. There could be no other explanation.

"When Mrs. Heath left her window open and her door shut, anybody climbing upon the open sash of Lloyd's high window could have put the bird upon the sill above. The match placed in the bird's beak for the purpose I have indicated and struck first, in case by accident it should ignite by rubbing against something and startle the bird—this match would, of course, be dropped just where the object to be removed was taken up; as you know, in every case the match was found almost upon the spot where the missing article had been left—scarcely a likely triple coincidence, had the match been used by a human thief.

"This would have been done as soon after the ladies had left as possible, and there would then have been plenty of time for Lloyd to hurry out and meet them before dark—especially plenty of time to meet them *coming back*, as they must have been, since they were carrying their ferns. The match was an article well chosen for its purpose, as being a not altogether unlikely thing to find on a dressing-table, and, if noticed, likely to lead to the wrong conclusions adopted by the official detective.

"In Mrs. Armitage's case, the taking of an inferior brooch and the leaving of a more valuable ring pointed clearly either to the operator being a fool or unable to distinguish values, and certainly, from other indications, the thief seemed no fool. The door was locked, and the gasfitter, so to speak, on guard, and the window was only eight or ten inches open and propped with a brush. A human thief entering the window would have disturbed this arrangement, and would scarcely risk discovery by attempting to replace it, especially a thief in so great a hurry as to snatch the brooch up without unfastening the pin. The bird could pass through the opening as it was, and *would have* to tear the pincushion to pull the brooch off—probably holding the cushion down with its claw the while.

"Now, in yesterday's case we had an alteration of conditions. The window was shut and fastened, but the door was open—but only left for a few minutes, during which time no sound was heard either of coming or going. Was it not possible, then, that the thief was *already* in the room, in hiding, while Mrs. Cazenove was there, and seized its first opportunity on her temporary absence? The room is full of

drapers, hangings, and what-not, allowing of plenty of concealment for a bird, and a bird could leave the place noiselessly and quickly. That the whole scheme was strange mattered not at all. Robberies presenting such unaccountable features must have been affected by strange means of one sort or another. There was no improbability—consider how many hundreds of examples of infinitely higher degrees of bird-training are exhibited in the London streets every week for coppers.

"So that, on the whole, I felt pretty sure of my ground. But before taking any definite steps, I resolved to see if Polly could not be persuaded to exhibit his accomplishments to an indulgent stranger. For that purpose I contrived to send Lloyd away again and have a quiet hour alone with his bird. A piece of sugar, as everybody knows, is a good parrot bribe; but a walnut, split in half, is a better—especially if the bird be used to it; so I got you to furnish me with both. Polly was shy at first, but I generally get along very well with pets, and a little perseverance soon led to a complete private performance for my benefit. Polly would take the match, mute as wax, jump on the table, pick up the brightest thing he could see, in

a great hurry, leave the match behind, and scuttle away round the room; but at first wouldn't give up the plunder to me. It was enough.

"I also took the liberty, as you know, of a general look-round, and discovered that little collection of Brummagem rings and trinkets that you have just seen—used in Polly's education, no doubt. When we sent Lloyd away it struck me that he might as well be usefully employed as not; so I got him to fetch the police—deluding him a little, I fear, by talking about the servants and a female searcher. There will be no trouble about evidence—he'll confess of that I'm sure. I know the sort of man."

"But I doubt if you'll get Mrs. Cazenove's brooch back. You see, he has been to London to-day, and by this the swag is probably broken up.

Sir James listened to Hewitt's explanation with many expressions of assent and some of surprise. When it was over he smoked a few whiffs and then said: "But Mrs. Armitage's brooch was pawned, and by a woman."

"Exactly. I expect our friend Lloyd was rather disgusted at his small luck—probably gave the brooch to some female connection in London, and she realized on it. Such persons

don't always trouble to give a correct address.'

The two smoked in silence for a few minutes, and then Hewitt continued: "I don't expect our friend has had an easy job altogether with that bird. His successes at most have only been three, and I suspect he had many failures and not a few anxious moments that we

know nothing of. I should judge as much merely from what the groom told me of frequently meeting Lloyd with his parrot. But the plan was not a bad one—not at all. Even if the bird had been caught in the act, it would only have been 'That mischievous parrot!' you see. And his master would only have been looking for him."



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MURDER in the TEMPLE



Beauty and Evil walked hand in hand that day. Mei Wong looked down at the body and nodded. Beauty and Evil—and their shadowy comrade, Murder...

a MR. MEI WONG story by DAN ROSS

BRIGHT AFTERNOON sunshine glared down on the stout Chinese in Panama hat and immaculate white linen suit who laboriously made his way up the broad stone steps fronting a temple-like building. The building was located on a side street of Bombay and the stout man was Mei Wong, the

noted art dealer. Reaching the top step, he paused and took out a white handkerchief from his coat pocket and mopped his brow. Only an urgent summons could have lured him from the cool and quiet of his studio on this blazing afternoon. The summons had been urgent indeed since it had to do with a murder.

As he hesitated there the entrance door of the temple opened and a tall, bronze-faced man with a pointed beard came out to welcome him. It was Inspector Bannerjee, Chief of the Bombay Homicide Division.

"You received my message," he said.

The venerable art dealer nodded as they shook hands. "I understand my client, Sir Ralph Nevers, has been murdered."

"That is what the evidence hints," the inspector said. He looked even taller than he was because of the high turban he wore.

Mei Wong regarded him with interest. "You mean that you have not come to any definite conclusion?"

"Come inside," Inspector Bannerjee suggested. "I'll let you make up your own mind."

They went into the dark, cool lobby, where a policeman stood grimly on duty. The inspector paused to continue their discussion before going

further into the temple. Frowning, he said, "How well did you know the late Sir Ralph Nevers?"

"Very well indeed," Mei Wong told him. "For years I have supplied him with fine objects of art. He was a sensitive man of good taste. He purchased many tapestries from me for this temple."

The inspector nodded. "Then you know something about his interest in this place, that he was being victimized by Alan Jackson who operates this temple and its cult, victimized by him and the temple's high-priestess, Kadonia."

Mei Wong nodded. "He spoke to me of these people. I warned him against them and the temple. But it seemed quite useless. He had become fanatical on the subject of the cult professed here and especially of the powers of the priestess, Kadonia. He seriously believed she could foresee the future."

"Too bad for him he hadn't had a gift like that himself," Inspector Bannerjee said as they stood there in the shadowed hallway. "He might have saved his own neck. He was a gullible fool where Jackson and this Kadonia were concerned, in spite of being one of the smartest bankers in the city. He was a bachelor, lonely and open to this type of chicanery."

"You describe him well," Mei Wong agreed. "A sad business."

"Jackson, the owner of the temple, started this cult purely as a racket to dupe the unwary. He's an Englishman with a bad record and has been mixed up in several illegal deals here before he founded this phony religion. As for Kadonia, she's as dangerous as she is beautiful. Her name is May Lee. She was born in Hong Kong of a Russian mother and a Chinese father. For a girl of twenty-one she has an imposing police record."

"You think one of the two may have murdered Sir Ralph," Mei Wong asked.

"I'm sure it was Jackson," Inspector Bannerjee said. "He was with Sir Ralph last. Claims he left him for awhile and when he returned the old man had committed suicide."

Mei Wong raised his eyebrows. "And you feel that instead Jackson murdered him?"

"Yes."

"The motive would be one of profit."

"Exactly," Inspector Bannerjee agreed. "We understand that Sir Ralph Nevers had made a will in which he left the bulk of his fortune to the temple and its leaders."

Mei Wong's placid face took on a bleak expression. He

sighed. "A most indiscreet move on Sir Ralph's part."

"Especially since he told Jackson all about it," the inspector said. "Now let us proceed into the temple."

Bannerjee opened extravagantly carved wooden doors and they went into a huge high-ceilinged room, bare except for a few ornate stools, a huge figure of a Buddha at one end on a raised platform and rich tapestries lining the walls. Incense burned in front of the Buddha figure. A rose-hued light suffused the room from concealed fixtures giving it an eerie atmosphere.

"I believe the teachings here have some similarity to those of Buddha," Mei Wong said, his voice echoing hollowly in the silence of the big room. "But it is not an authentic temple by any means."

"There's nothing authentic about Jackson. There never was," the inspector said harshly. "You'll have a chance to meet him and the girl now." He strode ahead and they walked the length of the temple, down past the overpowering Buddha and out through another doorway.

In a small chamber behind the Buddha a surly-faced man wearing loose yellow robes and having a clean-shaven head sat sullenly at a plant table. Across

from him but sitting looking the other way was one of the loveliest young women Mei Wong had ever seen. Her exotic, Oriental face was enhanced by a lithe figure. She had the tiara of a priestess, its diamonds and rubies glittering like her slant eyes. Her raven black hair was upswept and she wore a flimsy gown through which her lovely body could be seen in every exquisite detail.

Inspector Bannerjee stood before the two, who were also under police guard, and said sternly, "I have brought Mr. Mei Wong here in the hope he may be able to throw additional light on the crime."

The man in the yellow robe who was undoubtedly Alan Jackson jumped up at once with an angry expression on his lined face.

"Bloody nonsense!" he exclaimed. "I have told you the truth. Sir Ralph committed suicide. There should be no fuss about this. It's clear enough."

"Or so you'd like us to believe," the inspector said.

Jackson shook his head. "I've seen stupid policemen before but none to match you."

Mei Wong decided to speak to the annoyed man. "You were the last one to speak with my old friend, Sir Ralph?" he said.

Jackson glared at him. "Yes.



Unless Kadonia came by and talked with him while I was in my office."

The beautiful woman at the table suddenly gave her attention to them. Rising, she came forward majestically to declare, "I know nothing about this. It is wrong that Jackson should try to involve me! I warned Sir Ralph he had enemies. The old man trusted me. He should have listened to my warning!"

Mei Wong gave his attention to the beauty in the transparent gown. He could easily see how she had turned the bachelor Sir Ralph's head. He said, "My client was very fond of you?"

"He was a devout member of

our order," she said, with dignity. "He looked on me as a divinity."

Inspector Bannerjee's bronzed face was grim. He turned to Mei Wong. "And I'll now let you see what it brought him to." He led the art dealer across the room to a velvet curtain. He slowly pulled aside the curtain to reveal a small alcove.

Mei Wong uttered a soft cry of dismay as he was faced with the sight of his former client and friend hanging from an overhead beam. There was a silken cord knotted around his throat and his feet dangled a good twenty-four inches above the stone floor.

"Dreadful!" he commented, looking at the inspector.

"According to Alan Jackson it was a suicide," Inspector Bannerjee said sardonically.

"You have reason to doubt it?" Mei Wong asked.

"I tell you it has to be a suicide," Jackson cried angrily behind them. "You can see how he managed it by standing on the stool while he tied the cord around his neck. Then, kicking it away, he died."

The inspector gave the protesting Jackson a mocking smile as he went over and picked up the overturned stool that lay on the floor below the body. It was a lavishly carved

item with wine red satin to decorate its top. Holding it for them all to see, he said, "You are telling us Sir Ralph used this stool to stand on in his suicide. Yet you missed out on an important point. Sir Ralph's feet are a full twenty-four inches from the floor but this stool is only about twelve inches high. He couldn't possibly have used it."

Jackson uttered an oath. "I don't believe it!"

"We've already measured the distances carefully," the inspector said. "And I charge you with the murder of Sir Ralph!"

"One minute," Mei Wong said, raising a hand, he asked, "May I examine the stool." The Inspector gave it to him and he studied it carefully. "I sold this piece to Sir Ralph some time ago."

"So?" The Inspector asked with a frown.

"It has been tampered with," Mei Wong said. And lifting up the ornate stool he went on, "Someone has deliberately cut away the lower portion of it. Legs and support amounting to at least a foot. The bottom of the legs show marks of a saw."

Inspector Bannerjee stared at the stool legs. "You're right. What does it mean?"

"I suggest your men search for a saw," Mei Wong said

calmly. "Likely a tiny one. And perhaps they will also find the missing portion of the stool hidden somewhere since whoever managed this had little time to dispose of it."

"But why?" the inspector demanded.

"Someone wished to make Mr. Jackson's story seem a lie," Mei Wong said. "Someone who was likely responsible for Sir Ralph's suicide and who wanted to make it look like murder in order to become custodian of the fortune the old man had willed the temple. With Jackson in prison for murder this would have been easy."

Mei Wong turned to Kadonia. "I suggest you search

this young lady's private quarters for the missing evidence."

"Old fool!" the beautiful young woman in the priestess costume shrilled at him.

But it turned out Mei Wong was right. The saw and sections of the stool were found in a closet of her room. When they were presented to Inspector Bannerjee, the tall police officer looked embarrassed.

"If it hadn't been for you I'd have made a serious error," he told Mei Wong.

The old art dealer chuckled, "Being a much younger man than myself it is quite reasonable that you should have been blinded by the lovely Kadonia's charms."

In the Next Issue—A New Complete Short Novel—

THE SNATCH OF SHIRLEY KALE

Introducing: *RICK HARPER, Tough Detective*

by DAVID MAZROFF

The king of all the rackets smiled and it was not pretty to see. "They got my kid," he said. "By now she may be dead or maybe worse." He patted his shoulder holster. "Bring her back to me, Rick. And bring back the man who's holding her. I'll do the rest." Don't fail to read this arresting story, featuring a brand new hero. Get your copy now!

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The Killing of JOE THE BOSS



JOHNNY TORRIO

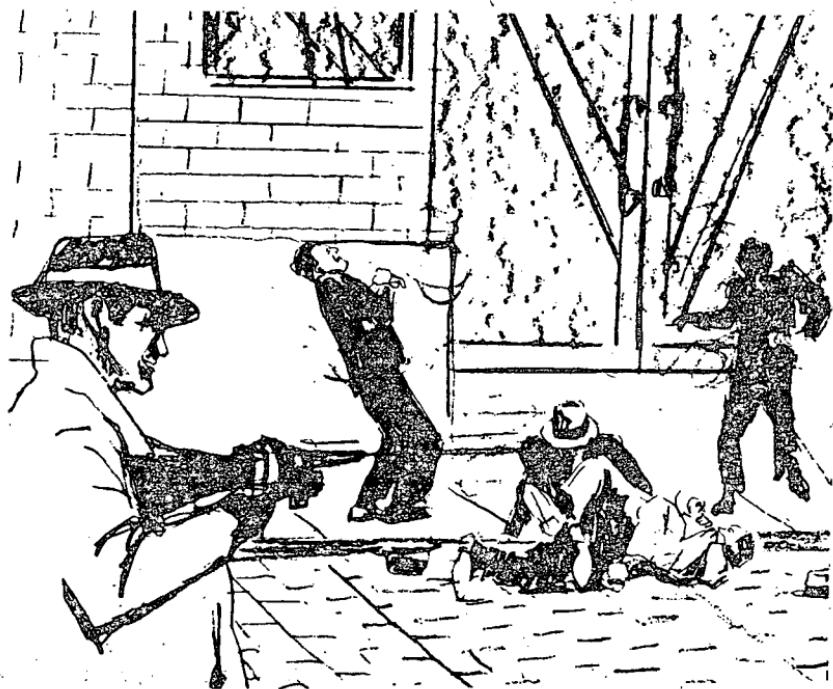
by DAVID MAZROFF

GIUSEPPE MASSERIA—Joe the Boss—first came to the attention of New York City police officers in 1907 when he was arrested on a charge of burglary. He was then twenty years old, a large youth with heavy shoulders, deep chest, big arms and strong hands. The face could have been hewn out of granite. His dark eyes, alert and searching, were the eyes of a thief and a murderer; burning

with a strange light. In his anger, which was explosive, the eyes turned cold. He terrorized whenever he faced at such a moment, and that included rival hoods. He was a natural leader who made himself feared by his countrymen even when he was in his teens.

Guiseppe Masseria arrived in New York from Italy in 1903 when he was sixteen years old. The family moved to the Little

Joe "The Boss" Masseria ruled New York for almost a quarter century before he was finally slain by the very men he called his friends, and whom he had made rich and powerful. He was a vicious, cold-blooded hood who had been responsible for more than fifty murders in the infamous Castellamarre War that shook up New York City. Masseria met his death the way he dealt it—by a double-cross.



Italy section around Mulberry Bend, the spawning ground of some of the nation's toughest gangsters and killers, including Al Capone, Lucky Luciano, Albert Anastasia, Ignazio "Lupo the Wolf" Saitta, and a host of others. The section seemed to have been con-

structed in anticipation of the coming of the poor, the wretched, the toil bent, miserable and driven people who had lived under the yokes of tyrants and an order of royalty sans mercy, compassion, or an understanding of their subjects.

The Law of Omerta was as

strong in the neighborhood as it was in Sicily where the Mafia enforced this Law of Silence with violent death. Those who were willing to talk to detectives in violation of the unwritten code did so reluctantly and fearfully. They insisted in the strongest language that their names never be mentioned.

"We have daughters," the detectives were told. "They would be seized, raped, violated unmercifully, and perhaps killed. It has happened. Lupo the Wolf did that to some of the young girls whose parents talked to the police. You understand?"

Lupo the Wolf was a vicious hoodlum and gang leader who took over a big part of lower Manhattan and all of East Harlem in the days when it was mostly white. He was a trafficker in narcotics, an extortionist, loan shark, white slaver, heistman, gunman, and a killer. His insatiable hunger for young girls, of all nationalities, the lush, full-breasted virgins or the very young married ones, was well known in the neighborhood. He had raped more than two score of these girls and women and not once had one of them, their parents or husbands, reported the attack.

When he appeared in the

area the word went out, a warning that a black plague was brewing, and parents locked up their daughters in bedrooms and bolted their front doors. When Lupo the Wolf deserted the Mulberry Bend neighborhood, mothers of young daughters went to church to thank their saints for this deliverance.

Their prayers and gratitude was short lived. No sooner had Lupo the Wolf deserted the area then Giuseppe Masseria appeared, a bull of a youth with an equally insatiable sex appetite. He made his presence felt immediately by a dozen knock-down and drag-out fights with the toughest youths in the district. He beat and kicked them insensible. He raped several young girls in the space of a week. Reports filtered into the precinct station. A team of detectives who spoke Italian went into the neighborhood to question families.

The detectives asked if the couple to whom they spoke knew of an incident, a girl's name, of rape, the man who had committed it.

"No, no," the man and his wife answered simultaneously, "no names." The man then said, "It would be of no use anyway. The girl would deny it. The family would deny it. It is kept secret. The shame of it. A

girl who has been raped has been dishonored. She is soiled. A young man would not want to marry her. His family would forbid it. You see, we Italians are very strict in the matter of virginity for our daughters. Only the husbands, and that only on the wedding night."

"Someone has to be willing, to talk, to come into court and testify against this man or he will continue to dishonor your daughters. Don't you see what I mean?"

"Yes, yes, of course, but those of us who have daughters, who have not been violated—" the man shrugged—"we hope and pray it will continue to be so until there is a husband to protect her. I am sorry. We can be of no further help. It is useless for you to continue talking to us or anyone else. Your being here in our flat is already dangerous to us. You must go."

"Yes," the man's wife added, "it is best. Please. You must go. We have two daughters. Fourteen and sixteen. Go. Please go!"

From 1907 to 1920, Giuseppe Masseria's name appeared on the police blotters for crimes of burglary, extortion, assault, and several shootings. There were no convictions. Detectives couldn't get a single witness to appear against him.

In 1920, however, and quite suddenly, Masseria's assaults against young women ceased, as did his minor offenses, and he began to build the power that gained him control over every kind of racket in existence. He had his hand in everything. Moreover, his ambition was to achieve the role of *Capo di Tutti Capi*, Boss of Bosses.

Masseria's flight from the sin of raping the young women of the neighborhood was not aesthetically influenced. Neither was it out of pity for dishonoring their persons or the taking of their virginity. The mental climate of his act in the cessation of attacks was less idealistic than it was satisfying. He hadn't either decided on a life of celibacy. He had become acquainted with a statuesque blond in one of the burlesque houses who became his willing mistress in return for releasing her from the slavery of six-a-day shows.

He settled her snugly in a five-room flat which he furnished luxuriously. She in turn taught him the pleasure and ecstasy to be derived from mature love given freely by an experienced woman. Mothers and fathers of daughters who may have become victims of Masseria's lust celebrated Masseria's union with the graceful and beautiful blond by further

prayers to their saints, and much drinking of wine.

In building up the gang that he hoped would help take him to the top, Masseria recruited a group of young hoods who were destined to become household words through the infamy of their criminal acts. Among them were Al Capone, Charles Luciano, Vito Genovese, Albert Anastasia, Joe Adonis, Frank Costello, Tommy Lucchese, Pietro "Pete" Morello, alias *The Clutching Hand*, and several others of lesser note but equal ability and talent. There were some who were feckless, of course. Bumblers who belonged strictly in the thug category, and these Masseria disposed of in one fashion or another.

Masseria did not have clear sailing, however, in his climb to the top despite the formidable array of talent he had gathered around him. He was opposed by three other gang leaders, Umberto Valenti, Salvatore Mauro, and the highly intelligent, equally vicious and dangerous Salvatore Maranzano, who also aspired to the role of *Capo di Tutti Capi*.

Salvatore Maranzano came from Castellammare del Golfo, a region bordering the Gulf of Castellammare on the north-western coast of Sicily. Masseria was a native of Sciacca, a town



JOE MASSERIA

on the west coast of Sicily, had migrated to Italy and then to New York. Since both Maranzano and Masseria were Sicilians, and thus eligible for membership in the *Unione Siciliana*, the society that ruled over the Mafia, detectives were at a loss to explain why the two were at war with each other.

Furthermore, while Maranzano stuck very close to the philosophy that only men from Castellammare could be trusted and so introduced them into his gang, Masseria chose men he felt would, and could, fit into his organization.

Vito Genovese, like Al Capone, was a Neopolitan.

Frank Costello, nee Francesco Castiglia, was a Calabrian. Reggio Calabria is an ancient district at the extreme south-eastern part of the Italian peninsula. Luciano, of course, was a Sicilian, a fact that aided him in his rise to the very top of the National Crime Syndicate. Pietro Morello was also a Sicilian but lacked Luciano's brains and genius for organization. He was strictly a killer. Frank Nitti, the enforcer for Capone when Capone took over from Johnny Torrio, was a marshmallow compared to Morello, who killed with relish. The team of Morello, Anastasia, Joe Adonis, and Luciano was as deadly and violent a quartet as was ever put together. Anastasia, when he became Lord High Executioner for Murder, Inc., was responsible for hundreds of murders throughout the country.

Masseria was bent on eliminating Maranzano and most of the top men in his gang. First, however, there was Umberto Valenti and Salvatore Mauro. They were gnats. He would finish them in quick order. Prior to eliminating these two he felt there was a more pressing matter. Albert Anastasia and Joe Florino.

Anastasia, then only nineteen years old, and Florino, one year older, were sitting uneasily

in a cell in Sing Sing's death house awaiting execution for the murder of a longshoreman named Joe Turello.

Masseria spoke to Morello, Adonis, and Luciano. "This matter must be taken care of immediately. Anastasia and Florino must not die like rats in that state frying pan. They are good boys. This girl, Margaret Victor, who testified against the boys, she must die. The sooner the better."

"She was Anastasia's girl-friend," Luciano pointed out. "He would not want her killed perhaps."

Masseria grunted. "A she-rat. She sent him to the death house. This is not a girl-friend. Would Anastasia want her to live so he could die? And Florino? Is she worth the price of two good young men? No!" He pounded a fist on the table. "She dies!"

"There are three other witnesses," Morello said.

"Yes, I know," Masseria replied. "Kill them!"

"Killing them might hurt the appeal," Luciano argued. "It is before the State Court of Appeals now."

Masseria clapped a hand to his forehead. "Charlie, I know! That is why these witnesses must die. If the appeal is granted and there are no witnesses then Anastasia and

Florino go free. Attend to it. Do not waste time. If the appeal is granted then the police will put these witnesses in protective custody and we will not be able to reach them. You understand? It must be done now, before the appeal is granted. Attend to it!"

THE EXECUTION of Anastasia and Florino was scheduled for the first week of July, 1921. Attorneys for the two men obtained a stay of execution. Early in December of that year, the State Court of Appeals reversed the conviction and ordered a new trial. Three of the witnesses were killed. Margaret Victor disappeared. She left the state without telling anyone where she was going. Since there were not witnesses left to testify against Anastasia and Florino, the indictments against them were dismissed with leave to reinstate. The search for Margaret Victor continued.

Anger lurked in Masseria's eyes as he spoke. "Pietro, you go find this little whore and do what you must. Anastasia and Florino are not safe while she lives."

Morello said, "I will do my best."

"I will search for her too," Florino said. "I have a great deal of interest in her. My life!"

Shortly thereafter, Anastasia and Florino were back in jail, again charged with murder. This time for the killing of a Red Hook grocer who refused to pay protection money. There were two women witnesses.

Masseria called Luciano and Adonis to his home. "These two women. You have a nice appearance. You speak softly. Here is a thousand dollars. Five hundred to each woman. Do it right. You suggest that it is possible they were excited during the killing, the men they saw were not Anastasia and Florino. All right. Go."

Whether or not the women accepted the bribe is unknown but what is known is that they feared reprisals. They couldn't identify Anastasia or Florino and the charges were dismissed.

Anastasia was charged on three more occasions with homicide in the next year. The charges were dismissed each time for lack of evidence. Luciano, Adonis, and Morello were doing their work well. Masseria was pleased with them, especially with Luciano who seemed to have a way with women.

In the light of later events, Masseria was ill repaid for his loyalty to Anastasia, the way he went all out to save him from the hot seat. Anastasia had only two loyalties, to his family and

to Louis "Lepke" Buchalter when Buchalter was Jewish and Anastasia was Sicilian. Such is the twisted code of the underworld.

In November, 1927, Joe Florino caught up with Margaret Victor in New Haven, Connecticut, grabbed a handful of her hair, dragged her to his car, and heaved her into the back seat while she screamed at the top of her voice. He drove her to Brooklyn where he turned her over to Anastasia. Masseria happened to be there at the time.

Anastasia looked her up and down as if she were a piece of ugly filth. He spat a mouthful of saliva into her face. "You bitch!"

She began to plead for her life.

Masseria stared at her with cold eyes. He turned to Florino, said in Italian, "Kill her!"

Anastasia said, "Take her out of my sight, Joe. She stinks!"

Florino hustled her from the house while she pleaded tearfully. "Don't kill me, Joe. Please don't kill me. I won't say anything about Albert again. I promise, Joe. Please! Please! Don't kill me. I want to live! Joe, I want to live!"

Florino drove her to a lonely street and stabbed her a score of times, certain she was dead.

She didn't die. In the hospital, she was questioned by detectives. Crazed with fear, she screamed Florino's name over and over.

Florino was arrested and charged with "Felonious Assault" and "Attempted Murder." At the trial, Margaret Victor changed her testimony. It was a dark night and she didn't see her assailant's face clearly. Florino was acquitted. He was treated to a long string of vehement denunciations by the judge.

"I am convinced you are guilty as sin in the attack upon this young woman. I predict you will be in court again very soon. If you should appear before me, I assure you that you will be treated as you deserve. You are a vicious animal." He turned to a bailiff. "Take this person from my court. I can't stand to look at him!"

Masseria, who was in court as a spectator, drew Florino's lawyer to one side after the case was dismissed, and handed him an envelope. "There is a thousand dollars in that envelope. See to it that the girl gets it. She needs a change of climate. New York is very bad for her health. You understand, Counselor?"

"Of course. I'll take care of it."

MASSERIA now turned his attention to the matter of eliminating bothersome competition. The first one on his list was Salvatore Mauro, a tough gunman. The two met on Chrystie Street.

Mauro said, "Joe, you done wrong. You grabbed up a lot of things on the East Side without the okay. The Brotherhood don't like this. I don't like it. No trouble for you, no trouble for me, if we split the territory."

"Who's the Brotherhood?" Masseria asked and sneered. "You know who's the Brotherhood, Sal?" He jabbed a thumb into his chest. "Me! But I'm a generous man. I'm gonna do something for you. Let's step in this doorway where nobody can see us."

He took Mauro's arm and led him into the doorway, pushed him hard so that Mauro went spinning off-balance and then shot him dead before Mauro could finger his gun.

Masseria's next victim was Umberto Valenti. Masseria killed him too, in the same fashion, and only a few yards from Police Headquarters. He wanted to do these killings alone, as Capone was doing in Chicago, to prove to his rivals that he needed no one but himself to enforce his rule and his right to the position as Boss. With the



LUCKY LUCIANO

killings of Mauro and Valenti there remained only Salvatore Maranzano. The task of killing Maranzano eventually was to prove to be Masseria's downfall.

The war between Masseria and Maranzano for complete domination of the rackets gave heart to the good Italian and Sicilian folk who were delighted at the prospect that both were likely to kill off each other, as well as many of the gang. The gangs' caperings in flares of brimstone and murder was applauded furtively but joyously.

A few weeks after the Valenti killing, Masseria's gunmen caught up with Vincent Morelli, a nephew of Lupo the

Wolf Morelli took over the reins of the gang after his uncle was sent to Sing Sing for a long term. He foolishly joined forces with Maranzano against Masseria. He had his own way in East Harlem and could have held the territory without interference from either Maranzano or Masseria but he was ambitious and wanted to spread out.

Pietro Morello, Anastasia, Florino, and Luciano caught up with Morelli at 116th Street and Second Avenue, near his home. They opened up on him with four guns. Seriously wounded, Morelli dropped to one knee, drew his gun and returned the fire of the four men in the car. He was hit several times more.

Patrolman Winter of the 126th Street Station arrived a minute later, just as the automobile with the killers in it raced away. Morelli was dead. Maranzano set out to avenge the killing.

On May 7, 1922, a wild shooting affray broke out between the two factions on crowded Grand Street on New York's Lower East Side, a block east of Police Headquarters.

The wild shooting affray that broke out on this day was a culmination of the desperate rivalry between Masseria and Maranzano for control of the

city's rackets. The vicious attacks on innocent men and women who got in the line of fire was a shocking affront to the peace and order of a neighborhood that already knew too much of violence.

A young girl, a woman, and four men, innocent victims, were struck by bullets. The gun battle occurred shortly before six o'clock in the evening.

The girl who was shot was Frances Kahn, eighteen years old, a stenographer, who was on her way home at 78 Orchard Street. She was shot in the back and taken to Gouverner Hospital.

Mrs. Clara Nathanson, a young married woman of twenty-three, residing at 141 Monroe Street, was struck in a leg by two slugs. She was treated at Gouverneur Hospital and released.

Matteo Suriano, forty-one years old, of 78 Chrystie Street, who also was on his way home from work, was struck in the foot by a slug.

George Steengraffe, forty-two years old, a painter, who lived at 148 East Seventy-second Street, was treated at Bellevue Hospital for wounds in the right leg and left arm.

A man calling himself Silvio Tagliogambo, twenty-eight years old, who said he was a pressman and resided at 60 East

Fourth Street, was brought to the hospital in an ambulance. He had two bullet wounds in his body. He refused to make a statement other than he was shot shortly before six o'clock at Mulberry and Grand Streets. He was in a dying condition. Detective Howard O'Leary was called from the Oak Street Station.

Detective O'Leary tried to question Tagliogambo but the wounded man refused to answer any questions. He was hurried to the operating room where he underwent surgery.

The second man dangerously wounded was Frederico Petruzzello, thirty-five years old, a driver employed by the Street Cleaning Department. He was shot in the back and left hand and was removed to the Volunteer Hospital.

The street during the shooting affray was a shambles. People shouted and screamed as they attempted to get away from the central points of gunfire. Many men and women dropped to the ground. Others dashed into stores or sought shelter in doorways. Pushcarts were overturned. Windows shattered. Automobiles crashed together. A horse hitched to a wagon broke loose and ran in a crazy pattern down the street as men, women, and children shouted and fell over each other

in efforts to get out of the runaway horse's path.

About a hundred shots were fired by both sides. It was an insane, crackbrain, disordered attack but clearly defined the brazen disregard for innocent lives held by Masseria and Maranzano.

Once, in the wild days of the Capone-Bugs Moran-Hymie Weiss era, had a scene like this been duplicated. Bugs Moran and Hymie Weiss were psychopathic killers. Weiss, crazed with an urge to kill Capone after Jack McGurn, Albert Anolmi, and John Scalise murdered Dion O'Bannion in his flower shop on North State Street, led a caravan of a dozen cars into Cicero to the Hawthorne Hotel on 22nd Street where Weiss learned Capone was having lunch. With Capone at the time were McGurn, Willie Heeney, Frank Nitti, and Frankie Rio.

"The jackpot!" Weiss yelled. "We'll get 'em all, the bastards! Let's go!"

It was a little after noon and 22nd Street was thronged with workers from the General Electric Plant nearby who were enjoying the warmth of the day and strolling in twos and threes.

The lead car in the caravan stopped in front of the hotel. A gunman stepped leisurely from the car, pointed a pistol and

fired. He was shooting blanks, a ruse to lead Capone and the others to the door to see what the shooting was all about. The ruse failed.

At the sound of the first shot, Capone and the others dropped to the floor, as did the rest of the diners in the crowded restaurant. Weiss and Moran then ordered the other gunmen in the caravan to open fire. What followed was a bedlam almost impossible to describe as the hundreds of pedestrians scurried for cover.

Fortunately, only a woman and her infant son were injured. Mrs. Clyde Freeman was sitting in a car with her husband and year-old son. A slug struck the boy's knee. Flying glass from shattered windows pierced Mrs. Freeman's eye. Clyde Freeman escaped with no more than a slug through his hat.

When Al Capone learned of the injuries to Mrs. Freeman and her child, he arranged for medical attention for both and paid the bills. It was an act alien to both Masseria and Maranzano.

During the shooting affray on Mulberry and Grand Streets, two detectives stood within seventy-five feet of one group of gunmen. They gave chase to two of them through Mulberry Street, hampered by the screaming, crying, hysterical

groups who were dashing helter skelter and falling over each other.

One of the gunmen, a slim, dark-haired man, escaped. He was Charlie Luciano. The other was captured. He was taken to Police Headquarters, finger-printed, and identified as Joseph Masseria, thirty-five, who said he was an automobile dealer at 80 Second Avenue.

Detectives Sergeant Frank Di Marsico and Joseph Coonan, attached to the staff of Fifth Deputy Police Commissioner William Gillespie, interrogated Masseria, who refused to answer their questions.

Inspector Coughlin and Detective Sergeant Michael Fiaschetti then took over the questioning. Masseria remained silent. Another police officer, Detective Sergeant Edward Tracey, brought in a .38 caliber pistol and handed it to Inspector Coughlin.

"I saw this man throw that gun under an automobile," Detective Tracey said, nodding toward Masseria. "He was being pursued at the time by Sergeant Di Marsico."

"This is your gun, isn't it?" Inspector Coughlin asked Masseria.

Masseria shrugged.

"How many times have you been arrested, Masseria?" Inspector Coughlin asked. "You

can save yourself a lot of trouble by answering because we're going to bring in your file in just a minute."

Masseria shrugged again.

Masseria's arrest sheet showed that he had a record of eleven arrests dating back to 1907. There were suspended sentences on charges of burglary, extortion, assault, and attempted murder. In June 1913, however, he was sentenced to a term of four and a half years in Sing Sing in connection with an attempt to plunder Simpson's pawnshop at 164 Bowery Street. He beat that rap on appeal.

"Okay, Masseria," Inspector Coughlin said then, "empty your pockets. Let's see what you carry."

Masseria complied. Among his effects, to the amazement of the police officers in the room, was a pistol permit card dated January 23rd, 1922. The permit was signed and issued by Justice Selah B. Strong of the Supreme Court of Suffolk County. In a corner of the card the word *Unlimited* was written in ink which indicated that the bearer was authorized to carry a gun in any part of the state.

"I'm a sonofabitch!" Inspector Coughlin swore. "How the hell did a hood like you get a permit like this?" he demanded of Masseria.

Masseria shrugged.

"You filthy bastard!" Inspector Coughlin cursed at Masseria. "I'm going to get to the bottom of this if I have to burn every sonofabitch in hell who was connected with giving you this permit!"

Masseria shrugged again, then said, in a very calm voice, "I don't call you names, Inspector. I don't like it when you call me names. I got a mother and father. I'm no bastard, see."

"I know what you are!" Inspector Coughlin retorted. "Some half-dozen people were shot out there in the street. A couple of them may die. If they do, I'm going to see to it that you burn in the electric chair if it costs me my badge. Lock him up and book him on suspicion of assault with intent to kill. We can change it to murder one later. The reports from the hospital are bad."

Inspector Coughlin contacted Justice Strong by telephone in his chambers in Brooklyn.

"I have no recollection of having issued a permit to this man," Justice Strong said. "If, as you say, Inspector, my name was signed to the permit, the record in the Supreme Court of Suffolk will show that. The card you found on this man may have been issued on a renewed permit. Some of these

renewal cards I signed or approved in Brooklyn. Some of them were issued by me when I was Surrogate in Suffolk County. I never issue a permit to an alien. I always ask the applicant whether he has ever been arrested or convicted of any crime except automobile speeding, and the applicant must swear to the truth of his answers before I sign the permit."

"All right, Judge," Inspector Coughlin answered. "I guess there was a slipup somewhere along the line. I just want you to know that I'm confiscating Masseria's permit."

"Mail it back to me, Inspector. I want to give this further study. I'm as much interested in how this permit got into this man's hands as you are."

"Very well, Judge."

MASSERIA was released on a writ of habeas corpus. All charges against him were dropped. There were no witnesses who could testify against him no one who could state positively that he was one of the gunmen. Since he did have a permit for the gun, which he admitted, on advice of Counsel, was his, the gun charge also was dropped.

Masseria demanded that the weapon be returned to him.



ALBERT ANASTASIA

Inspector Coughlin turned purple with rage. "I should have you committed to Bellevue after that one! You're really nuts!" He turned to Masseria's lawyer. "Get this bum out of here before I break his damned neck!"

"Okay, Inspector," Masseria said in an aggravatingly calm tone, "you keep the gun for a souvenir. A present from me, eh?"

"Get him out of here!" Coughlin yelled.

Silvio Tagliogambo, who said he was a pressman when brought to the hospital with two bullet wounds in his body,

died. He was one of Salvatore Maranzano's gunmen.

Inspector Coughlin made ballistic tests of the gun to which Masseria admitted ownership. The slugs taken from the dead man did not fit Masseria's gun. Coughlin swore. He decided to pick up the gang leader anyway, if only to harass him.

Masseria was booked and arraigned. His lawyer argued that there wasn't enough evidence against Masseria to convict him of spitting on the sidewalk, that the arrest was a witch hunt, and, in view of the fact that neither the police nor the district attorney could offer probable cause, the least his client was entitled to was reasonable bail. The judge reluctantly agreed and released Masseria in \$15,000 bail. The charge of murder involving Silvio Tagliogambo was subsequently dismissed.

When Masseria was released he held a meeting at his home on Second Avenue. Present were Luciano, Joe Adonis, Pietro Morello, Vito Genovese, Albert Anastasia, and Joe Florino. Masseria spoke with a great deal of intensity.

"We have eliminated minnows. Mauro, Valenti, Tagliogambo, Morelli. A half dozen others. Now the big fish. There is not enough room in this town for Maranzano and me. Until

Maranzano is dead we shall always have trouble. I have been arrested and charged with the Mauro killing, the Valenti and Tagliogambo killings. It is enough. Inspector Coughlin—"he spat on the floor"—"that crazy Mick wants my heart. He would like nothing better than to witness my death in the electric chair. I have taken the advice of our good friend, Frank Costello. We are almost of the same age, mature, maybe—"he let a wry grin cross his features—a little too old for hard work. The elimination of those who oppose us must be done by younger men.

"When Costello was only seventeen," Masseria went on, "he was arrested on a charge of assault and battery. Again in 1912, when he was twenty-one. In 1915, he served ten months for carrying a gun. He has turned his intelligence to less dangerous pursuits. He is involved in many gambling enterprises, in supplying liquor to night clubs and saloons, and to restaurants. It is my plan to do the same. But first, and most important, the elimination of trouble. Maranzano. His top men. I leave that to you good men."

He turned to Pietro Morello. "You, Pietro, are most efficient with the gun and you have the courage of an enraged bull. You

will be in charge of the enforcers. You are willing?"

"Of course," Morello replied.

"You, Charlie, will work with your good friend, Giuseppe Doto, in lining up business. Saloons, night clubs, restaurants for our liquor sales. Also, you will establish places for gambling. You have a way for organization."

Luciano nodded.

"And you, Giuseppe?" Masseria said, turning toward Joe Doto.

"Please, mio Capo, I would prefer you call me by my chosen name. Joe Adonis. I have reasons."

Masseria grinned. "Of course. But I am named Giuseppe too. It is a good name. But, as you wish. You will work with Charlie?"

"Of course."

He assigned special tasks to Genovese, Lucchese, Anastasia, and Florino.

"Now," Masseria said, "you men will comprise the inner circle of this organization. You will decide among yourselves which of the others you wish to aid you in your work. I shall work out the financial arrangements for each of you in the next few days. You have work to do. Attend to it." He nodded to each of the men, rose, and walked from the room.

In the next two months there were a score of killings on both sides. The one name that kept cropping up during this period was that of Charlie Luciano. The Deadly One. Charlie the Silent. No definite proof against him in the matter of the killings for there were no witnesses. Morello and Genovese killed openly, with an arrogant defiance against those who may have witnessed the crimes. Those who saw them in the acts of murder denied it.

Maranzano kept score, marked the names of Morello and Genovese in a little black book for vengeance against them. Luciano? If Morello and Genovese didn't kill the others, then who did? It had to be that snake with the cold eyes, the one who never smiled.

"Yes," Maranzano told himself, "he is a snake, or the living ghost who moves in the night, swift and deadly, and then disappears into the dark shadows of the shielding streets while his victims lay bloodied and dead behind him." Maranzano promised himself that at the right time, this ghost of the night, this silent killer, would disappear. "A stiletto in his heart!" he cried aloud.

Luciano had a plan for himself. He intended to be the top man, the head of the Organization. Killing now was

necessary in order to prove himself. Later, there would be more important work, the rebuilding of the entire structure that was so loosely tied together. He would plan out a whole new system not only in the internal organization but of the entire city, and of the country. It would be so strong that no one would dare challenge it. Masseria didn't belong. He was too Old World in his thinking, followed other leaders rather than led. That was no good. To be a real leader, one had to move in front, initiate ideas, put them into motion, control their operation, destroy without mercy those who opposed him.

Masseria was no fool, however. He was innately clever, shrewd, allowed situations to develop to its fullest and then acted. His real fault was that he trusted too deeply those he took into his confidence. Luciano, like Capone, trusted no one.

Word from Chicago came to Luciano that Capone was now Johnny Torrio's chief lieutenant since the murder of Big Jim Colosimo. Al Capone was smart. He would rise to great power in time, and he would be an important ally. Luciano told himself that he had to woo Frankie Yale who headed the Unione Siciliano in Brooklyn

and Manhattan. Yale had been with Capone the day they murdered Colosimo. Capone could talk to Yale, persuade him. All Capone would have to say would be that, "Luciano is my friend. I want you to help him." It would be enough. It was a new era. The Old Ones, the Mustache Petes, who now ruled the various branches of the Mafia, didn't understand what was really happening. They had to be eliminated. Masseria, on the other hand, regarded Frankie Yale as a bum whose power in the Mafia was of no importance. If Yale got in his way he would have him killed. It was as simple as that.

This was the deadly game. Luciano's lust for power. Masseria convinced he had already gained it. Maranzano holding to the belief that once he eliminated Masseria he would hold New York in the palm of his hand. The time bomb of the internecine war, the Castellammarese War, was about to explode. What was provocative about it, the struggle between Maranzano and Masseria for supremacy, was that neither suspected the hidden menace until it was too late. Luciano sat back and waited.

On August 7, three months to the day following the shooting affray on Mulberry

and Grand Streets, an attempt was made to kill Masseria by Maranzano's gunmen.

Shortly before one o'clock in the afternoon of this hot August day, a blue Hudson touring car came slowly up Second Avenue. Three men, besides the driver, were in the car which stopped at Fifth Street directly in front of Finkelstein Brothers' butcher shop on the uptown side of the street and about twenty feet west of Second Avenue. Two of the passengers got out of the car and walked back to Second Avenue. They entered a restaurant directly across from Masseria's home, took seats near the door, ordered coffee, and glued their attention to the three-story, old-fashioned brownstone dwelling across the way.

The chauffeur in the car lighted a cigarette, leaned back, and turned his eyes toward the same dwelling. The third passenger in the car remained in the rear seat and watched the throng passing along the streets, shawled housewives bargaining with the pushcart men or ducking in and out of stores, and long-bearded men wearing the traditional *Yarmulkah*, the Jewish skull cap, as they strolled along the street.

An hour passed. Over in Beethoven Hall, the striking



AL CAPONE

members of the cloak-makers unit of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union were busy devising ways and means of beating the "bosses". The two men at the table in the restaurant watched and waited.

AT TWO o'clock, Joe Masseria walked down the stoop of his home and, turning north, started along Second Avenue.

The two men in the restaurant rushed into the street and ran across the avenue. As they reached the curb they drew automatics. Masseria saw

them. He turned and ran toward the Mathilda Millinery Company, changed his mind, and dashed toward his home. He got only as far as the women's wear shop of Heiney Brothers at 82 Second Avenue, next door to his home.

One of the brothers was in the store. He froze in alarm as the two gunmen followed Masseria into the store, leveled their guns and fired. Masseria jumped to one side and the bullets smashed into the front window. The gunmen fired again. Masseria ducked, straightened, threw a bolt of cloth at the gunmen, and dashed for the street. The gunmen fired after him, and again slugs smashed into the plate glass.

Masseria darted up the stairs of his home, slammed the door shut just as several slugs splintered the wood. The gunmen emptied their guns into the door. The street was in an uproar. Scores of men, women, and children yelled and screamed as they sought a safe haven. Women carrying packages stumbled and fell, left their bundles of groceries scattered on the sidewalk and scurried for cover.

The gunmen, knowing further chase was useless, ran toward their car, climbed in, and the driver started west through Fifth Street. At that moment, a

half-block from the scene of the shooting, the strikers poured out of Beethoven Hall. About fifty of the men were already on the sidewalk, heard the yells and screams, saw the car with one of the gunmen on the running-board, pistol in hand, and a large group ran into the street as shouts of "*Stop that car!*" rang through the air.

It was a foolish thing to do. The gunmen in the car, and the one on the running-board opened fire on the group attempting to stop them. Eight men fell, and the crowd broke and ran for cover.

The eight men who were wounded were Isidore Bittner, Morris Faderman, Jacob Goldstein, Morris Grossfeld, David Haltman, Felix Stump, Hyman Youngberg, and Isidore Zaskof. Bittner was in serious condition with shots in the mouth and neck. Goldstein was in critical condition with a wound under the heart.

Detectives from the Fifth Street Police Station, a short block away, rushed to the scene, fired at the speeding car. The car turned a corner and sped away.

At Eighth Street and Third Avenue, Detective Lieutenant James Cook and two other detectives were waiting to take a surface car uptown on another case. They saw the

touring car whizz past, saw the pursuit organizing three blocks away, commandeered a car and gave chase. At Fourteenth Street the gunmen headed west to Fourth Avenue and sped up that thoroughfare. At Madison Avenue and 31st Street, Cook lost sight of the car ahead. Back on Third Avenue and Tenth Street, however, Detective Greer of the Clinton Street Station had caught the license number of the speeding fugitive car.

Captain Arthur Carey of the Homicide Squad arrived from Headquarters and took charge of the detectives and uniformed officers who had converged on the scene.

Fifteen witnesses were rounded up from the excited crowd and detectives took them to the Fifth Street Station. From information given detectives, Captain Carey assigned Detective Frank Cassetti to go to Masseria's home and interrogate the gang leader.

Detective Cassetti found Masseria sitting on the bed in the master bedroom, thoroughly shaken and still wearing his straw hat. There were two bullet holes in it. Cassetti took Masseria to the Fifth Street Station where he was questioned at length by Captain Carey and Assistant District Attorney Francis P. Marro.

Masseria said he could not identify his attackers.

"I never saw them before in my whole life," he said. "They were strangers to me."

"They were like hell!" Captain Carey retorted. "You know damned well who they were! Eight men were shot down in cold blood in that street. You understand *that*! Eight men! Two of them are in very bad shape. I want the names of those men who tried to get you!"

"I tell you I don't know them," Masseria insisted. "Never saw them before. What do you want me to do, give you names out of a hat?"

Captain Carey snatched the straw hat from Masseria's head and held it up. "Look at it!" he shouted. "Two slugs. They could have been in your head. You were damned lucky. But not those eight men. Now, I'm telling you for the last time, I want the names of those men or I'm going to ride you until hell freezes over, every damned day! You get that!"

"That's up to you."

"You damned right it's up to me. You and that bunch of punks you got in your mob were involved in the shootings on Mulberry and Grand Streets. Six people were shot down in that one. Eight in this one. Fourteen innocent people, one

of them a young woman. What the hell do you think we're going to do, let you bastards turn this town into a shooting gallery! Like hell. I'll lock up every sonofabitch in your gang on one charge or another, day after day, week after week, until I break you. And that goes for Maranzano and his gang, too. We're not as dumb as you bastards think. We know what the hell is going on and we're going to stop it."

"That's ... your business," Masseria answered.

Captain Carey snorted. He turned to a detective: "Lock him up. We're holding him as a material witness until we get to the bottom of this. Send out some men and pick up Luciano, Adonis, Genovese, Morello, and anybody else you know of connected with this bum. Throw their asses in the can and keep them there."

He turned to Masseria. "How do you like that?"

"I want to call a lawyer."

"The phones are temporarily out of service, Masseria." Captain Carey turned to another detective. "Cassetti, take a couple of men with you and round up as many of Maranzano's hoods as you can find. Book them on charges of assault with intent to kill, felonious assault, starting a riot, attempted murder, and any-



thing else you can think of. Sweat 'em! No phone calls. Incommunicado. If necessary, put them on the merry-go-round. It'll take their lawyers a month to find 'em!"

Captain Carey was up against a brick wall. The Law of Omerta was upheld by the more than a score of men who were picked up on both sides. They were all released after several days on writs of habeas corpus and the case fell apart.

Masseria went back into action. He would go with his gunmen in search of Maranzano and his gang. "I will not sit back like a clown or hide behind closed doors. We will kill every Maranzano man, and Maranzano. That is the plan."

The killings went on. This time, however, the wild street shootings were abandoned in favor of isolating a victim and murdering him without endangering any innocent persons.

Masseria did not lose sight of the fact that he had to keep his rackets going in order to meet the heavy payroll of his gang. He called in Luciano for a conference.

"Charlie, you did a good job setting up places for our booze business. I'm gonna give you six square blocks for your territory. You gonna have Broadway and 42nd Street to 47th Street and Lexington Avenue. That's a very rich district, Charlie. Lots of saloons, lots of swells in the big apartment buildings and hotels. Everybody will have to buy from you." He thumped Luciano lightly on the chest several times. "And you, Charlie, will buy from me. I make you boss of your own family. Who you want;"

"Adonis, Anastasia, Genovese, and Morello."

Masseria grinned. "You're a very smart boy, Charlie. Okay. But not Morello. You satisfied?"

"Ah, that's good. Yes. Whatever I say. Me, Joe the Boss. I make you rich, you help me get rich."

Luciano set out to build his own empire, away from Masseria; but with an eye to taking over all that Masseria controlled. He recruited his own men, among them Meyer Lansky and Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, two young hoodlums who operated

several rackets in the Jewish section of the Lower East Side. Siegel proved to be as deadly as Pietro Morello. Lansky was intelligent, a wizard at figures and percentages.

Maranzano learned of the new organization Masseria constructed. He foresaw that greater threats to his position and safety would come in the formation of families Masseria had set up. He knew that each head of the family would strengthen his own mob but that each mob would be under orders of Masseria, at his beck and call, and that by sheer numbers he would be in a position to wipe out opposition and so take over. Maranzano shook his head in rueful gesture. He had underestimated Masseria. That was a bad mistake. Well, first pull the teeth of the tiger then either housebreak him or kill him at will. The teeth of Masseria's tiger included Morello, Luciano, Anastasia, Genovese, and Adonis. He marked them for death.

Masseria was aware of the fact that his plan would come to the attention of Maranzano and that Maranzano would implement his gang with fresh blood, the tough young punks steaming in from the Sicilian town of Castellammare del Golfo in the steerages of a

dozen ships, Mafia orientated, eager to join forces with the leader whose name had become famous in Castellammare. Masseria thus welcomed men like Siegel, Lansky, Dutch Schultz, Lepke Buchalter, Jake "Gurrah" Shapiro, Abe Reles, Pittsburgh Phil Strauss, and all the others, non-Italians, non-Sicilians, but hard-nosed, tough, gunmen, killers.

While Masseria and Maranzano were building their organizations toward eliminating each other, Luciano was quietly forging ahead in other rackets, gambling, narcotics, and prostitution.

IN THE NEXT several years the war between Masseria and his arch rival Maranzano continued. Maranzano's gunmen got another chance at Masseria several months after Masseria personally gunned down two of Maranzano's torpedos. However, the only victims were a little girl and a street cleaner. Both were wounded. Maranzano's gunmen were notably inaccurate.

Masseria began to get suspicious of members of his own gang. Someone, it seemed, was giving information to Maranzano as to his movements. How else could he be ambushed so many times? He learned that Frankie Yale was the double-

crosser. But Yale had to be fed tips, and those tips had to come from the inside. He decided to kill Yale.

Frankie Yale controlled a dozen or more lucrative rackets in Brooklyn. He was hungry for money and power and would cross his own mother to get it. He felt he was secure against gangland bullets because he was a close ally of Al Capone. Masseria knew Capone as a young tough who once had worked for him for fifty dollars a week.

On a peaceful, sunny afternoon in July, 1928, Yale was driving home in his sporty coupe. He was at peace with the world. Maranzano had promised him ten per cent of Masseria's rackets once Masseria was eliminated. Children were playing in the street. Women sat on their porches in rocking chairs, rocking, knitting, talking across the spans that separated them.

Suddenly, a car with two men in it turned the corner and fell in behind Yale's car. The shots came swiftly, struck Yale in the back of the head. Yale's car crashed onto the sidewalk, scattering frightened children and mothers from its path.

Frankie Yale got an impressive funeral. A huge floral wreath with a white ribbon carried the legend: FROM YOUR PAL, JOE MASSERIA

Masseria and Augie Carafano were questioned. It was the same old story. No witnesses. No evidence. Both men were cleared.

In June 1929, Masseria and Little Augie Carfano caught up with Frankie Marlow, a Maranzano gunman, who had made an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Masseria. This was always a fatal error. Masseria was contemptuous of bunglers, even those who tried to kill him. He shot Marlow five times. Carfano shot him three times. They threw his body on a lot in Flushing.

In some unexplainable fashion, the grapevine of the underworld picks up inside information. Much of it is funneled to certain detectives. They picked up Masseria and Carfano, questioned them at length, held them for three days and then released them. Information is one thing. Proving it is another.

On February 26, 1930, Masseria and Pietro Morello shot and killed Gaetano Reina. Masseria learned that Reina, one of his own men, had been playing footsie with Maranzano. This sort of conduct, in Masseria's eyes, was inexcusable.

"I treated him like my own brother," Masseria said to Morello. "Well, Cain knocked

off Abel. Why not Masseria knocks off Reina, huh? Let's go. I got the word."

Reina was visiting friends at 1522 Sheridan Avenue in the Bronx. A little after eight o'clock in the evening he stepped out into the street.

Masseria yelled at him. "Hey, Gaetano, my brother. Over here!"

Reina turned. He was only a few feet from the car. Morello leveled the double-barreled shotgun he held and pulled both triggers. The blast blew Reina's guts and heart from his body.

Maranzano learned that Morello was the gunman who had murdered Reina. He called in three of his top executioners, Girolamo (Bobby Doyle) Santucci, Nick (Nick the Thief) Capuzzi, and Angelo (Buster) DiMarco.

"Morello!" he spat out. "Farlo fuori!" he said in Italian. "Kill him!"

The hunt for Morello began and went on unabated for several months. Maranzano's executioners lacked the finesse and precision of Masseria's killers. However, they did bag two of Masseria's top men in an ambush.

Masseria had called a conference with seven of his lieutenants, including Lucky Luciano; Joe Adonis, Vito

Genovese, Albert Anastasia, and Little Augie Pisano. The meeting was held in the Alhambra Apartments at 750-60 Pelham Parkway on November 5, 1930. The meeting over, the men started for the street. Masseria walked behind two bodyguards who led him to his armored car.

A gun in a window on the ground floor of one of the apartments burst into a murderous chatter, then another gun, and still another. Alfred Mineo and Joseph Catania fell dead, shattered by shotgun fire. Maranzano's killers were improving on their accuracy.

Masseria countered by killing Joe Pinzola. Tommy Lucchese lured Pinzola to his office, the California Dry Fruit Importers, Suite 1007, in the Brokaw Building, 1487 Broadway. About nine in the evening, Masseria and two of his executioners walked in, aimed their guns and shot Pinzola dead. Lucchese, of course, had left the office five minutes before on a pretext and had an alibi. He was in a coffee shop. A dozen witnesses placed him there at the time of the shooting.

Maranzano then put up a hundred thousand dollars to anyone who would kill Masseria. Joe the Boss learned of the price on his head.

"Okay," he said to his men,

I will put a price on Maranzano's head. A nickel! That's all the bum's worth." Everyone laughed. "When you kill him," Masseria said, "put the nickel in his hand. Then everyone will know he was a bum!"

Masseria continued to take over racket after racket, many of them in Maranzano's territory. He had grown powerful beyond his wildest dreams. Money was pouring in from all sides, liquor, gambling, shylocking, extortion, protection, and in many legitimate enterprises into which he had poured hundreds of thousands of dollars. Arrests didn't bother him. He had retained three of the best criminal lawyers in the city. No sooner was he picked up then one of them was at the station with a writ of habeas corpus.

Captain Carey and Inspector Coughlin were helpless in the face of the war between Masseria and Maranzano. The press howled in their editorials about the killings, the endangering of honest citizens, and raked the Commissioner over the coals for his ineptitude and failure to halt the murderous activities of the two gangs.

On the scene at this time came Louis "Lepke" Buchalter and Jake "Gurrah" Shapiro, bosses of Murder, Inc., to

further plague the police. Masseria made an alliance with Buchalter, something Maranzano refused to do. It didn't matter one way or another. Murder, Inc., finally ended the careers of both Masseria and Maranzano.

Maranzano, meanwhile, still wanted Morello. He felt that killing Morello would greatly weaken Masseria's executioners. On August 15, 1930, three of Maranzano's gunmen walked into Morello's office at 362 East 116th Street. Morello saw them too late. He reached for his gun but was shot down before he could pull it. Killed with him was a visitor in the office, Giuseppe Pariano, who was there on legitimate business.

JOE MASSERIA was certain now that someone had put Morello on the spot, someone in his own organization, and that someone, he was sure, was Luciano. He was sick at heart. He had done so much for Lucky Luciano. How could Charlie double-cross him? He refused to believe it. He decided to keep an eye on Luciano, to test him in many ways, to set small traps. If Luciano fell into them, then he would be sure, and then he would act.

Masseria's weakness lay in the fact that he trusted too



LEPKE BUCHALTER

much and too long. Although he had grown as powerful as Capone in Chicago, or even more so, he didn't possess Capone's directness in the matter of eliminating threats to either his position or his life. At the first indication of suspicion that a member of the mob was disloyal, Capone killed. He used a baseball bat to break the skulls of John Scalise and Albert Anselmi, two of his top torpedoes when he was told they were plotting to kill him and take over. Had Masseria ordered Luciano murdered he might have survived the Castellammare War.

Maranzano, on the other

hand, played to men's greed. He knew that Luciano was ambitious, that Luciano wanted to take over Masseria's position.

He arranged a meeting with Luciano, made a pact with him.

"Kill Masseria and I will back you. You and I can work as a team, in peace. There is enough for us both."

Luciano agreed.

The story that Luciano invited Masseria to lunch at an Italian restaurant in Coney Island, feasted with Masseria, and later excused himself, went into the washroom, a signal for the killers to come in and murder Masseria, is apocryphal.

Luciano had Masseria's movements watched day and night waiting for the propitious moment to take him. It finally came.

At one P.M. on April 14, 1931, Messeria drove his steel armored sedan a massive car with plate glass an inch thick in all its windows, to a garage near the Nueva Villa Tammaro at 2715 West Fifteenth Street, Coney Island, and parked it. He then went into the restaurant. He was alone.

At two o'clock the quiet of the little street near the bay was broken by the roar of gunfire. Three men, Albert Anastasia, Bugsy Siegel, and Vito Genovese, walked out immediately after the shooting, looked back

into the restaurant, appeared to be satisfied, got into an automobile parked at the curb and drove away.

When the police got there they found Mrs. Tammaro bending over the body of Joe the Boss. He lay on his back. In his left hand was clutched a brand new ace of diamonds. A few chairs were overturned in the restaurant and a deck of cards was strewn over the floor. There were several banknotes and a small amount of silver, about \$35 in all, scattered on the table and on the floor.

Police questioned Mrs. Tammaro. She could not identify the killers. She claimed she was in the kitchen when the shooting began. Her son-in-law, Gerardo Scarpato, the owner of the restaurant, said he was out for a walk at the time.

Four hours after the shooting, the automobile in which Masseria's murderers escaped was found abandoned at West First Street near King's Highway, Brooklyn, about two miles from the Nuova Villa Tammaro. On the back seat were three pistols. One lacked two cartridges. One had discharged three cartridges recently. The third was fully loaded. Two other revolvers were found in the alley that runs along one side of the restaurant.

Investigation showed that

the abandoned automobile was reported stolen last November by Ercole Marchino of 150 East Forty-ninth Street, Manhattan. The plates on the car were new. They were not registered, according to the police.

The only persons in the restaurant when the police arrived minutes after the shooting were Gerardo Scarpato and Mrs. Anna Tammaro, his mother-in-law. Charlie "Lucky" Luciano was not there!

Police Commissioner Mulrooney ordered an intensive investigation into the shooting. Forty detectives were put on the case. They ran into the usual blank wall of terrified silence on the part of those who might have revealed worthwhile clues.

Fingerprint experts searched carefully through the huge armored car belonging to Masseria and the car that was abandoned in West First Street. They also examined the three pistols found in the abandoned car and the two which had been thrown in the alley beside the restaurant. Their efforts were fruitless.

James Masseria, twenty-one-years, son of Joe the Boss, and Carmine Nicarus, a brother-in-law, were questioned for several hours at Brooklyn Police Headquarters after they had formally identified the body of

the slain man at the Kings County Morgue. They could offer police no information other than the fact that there was bad blood between the dead man and Salvatore Maranzano. This much the police already knew.

An autopsy on Masseria's body at the King's County Morgue showed that he had been shot three times in the back, once in the neck, and once just above the eye. It was a thoroughly professional killing, the kind Bugsy Siegel, Anastasia, and Genovese were to do a hundred times over in the ensuing years.

Luciano took over as the boss of the organization. He got in touch with Capone in Chicago and asked for a meeting. Capone agreed. The top men of the various gangs were asked to join in. Everyone accepted. The meeting was held in Atlantic City. Present were Al Capone, Frank Nitti, Johnny Torrio, Frank Costello, Meyer Lansky and Bugsy Siegel, Lepke Buchalter and Jake Shapiro, and a score of other gang leaders from all over the country. Luciano sat at the head of the table. Maranzano was conspicuous by his absence, as were any of his men.

It was agreed that all the old timers, the Mustache Petes, had to go. They were out of step

with modern times. Killings of the kind that went on during the Castellammare War had to cease. A tribunal was established before which any boss charged with violating the rules of the new Criminal Syndicate would have to appear. The run of the mill soldiers in each mob would be tried by each respective boss. Lepke Buchalter was elected judge of the Tribunal.

On September 10, 1931, Lucky Luciano sent word to all the bosses in the country that every old timer was to be killed. On that day.

At 2:05 P.M. of that eventful day in gangland, four

men, Bugsy Siegel, Albert Anastasia, Vito Genovese, and Joe Adonis, walked into the office of the Eagle Building Corporation, rooms 925 and 926, at 230 Park Avenue, shot and stabbed Salvatore Maranzano to death and quietly walked out.

It was the final note to the infamous Castellammare War, and the beginning of a new era in gangdom for on that very same day forty Mustache Petes were also assassinated in a mass murder plot.

Masseria trusted too much. Maranzano underestimated Luciano's ambitions. It was fatal to both of them.



Coming Soon:

Another TRUE CRIME STORY Masterpiece

WHO KILLED VIVIEN GORDON?

by DAVID MAZROFF



Was I looking at the
shape of Murder—or
something even worse?

DEATH IN CAMERA

by
JERRY REGAN

WE DISCOVERED George Carson sitting on his couch, in a relaxed, almost comfortable, position.

But a bullet had travelled diagonally through his head, entering at a point behind his left ear and emerging just above his right eye.

There was a miniature camera on Carson's chest—the kind used for taking 'candid' pictures, an expensive job capable of taking clear photos in any light, indoors or out. It was suspended on a leather strap round his neck.

On the couch, close to his left hand, was the gun which

had sent the bullet through Carson's head.

To a young and inexperienced detective-sergeant like myself it had all the earmarks of an ordinary suicide. I should have liked to record it as such and save a lot of bother. Instead, I thought it advisable to enlist the older, more practised, mind of Superintendent Taylor.

"The prints on the gun are indistinct, sir, and they could be anybody's," I told him. "The burn marks show that the gun was fired at very close range, which seems to point to suicide."

"But is never definite," Taylor answered, adding: "Do we know if Carson was left-handed?"

I was ready for that. "As far as we can find out, he wasn't," I said. "Nevertheless, sir, if he *did* shoot himself, he held the gun in his left hand. The gun was lying by his left hand, and the bullet entered behind his left ear."

Superintendent Taylor pinched his lip. "That's what looks so damned queer," he muttered. "Behind his left ear. An unusual point of entry, isn't it? They usually take aim at their temples. To achieve this effect, Carson would have had to hold the gun at a very awkward angle. Doesn't that strike you as odd?"

I swallowed and said: "Well, yes, sir."

"Look at it this way," the superintendent said. "Suppose someone came up behind him as he sat there and fired point blank at his head—with the object of making it *look* like a suicide? Carson might suddenly have turned his head as the shot was fired, causing the bullet to enter behind his ear?"

I nodded. I never disagree with the super.

"What about the camera round his neck?" Taylor asked. "Were there any pictures in it?"

I was ready for this one too.

I said: "Yes, sir. We're waiting for the roll to be printed now. They may not be much good to us. Carson was always shooting pictures, all over the place."

The super thought for a minute. "We can't rule out suicide yet. But assuming someone killed him, who stood to gain?"

"Nobody gained anything financially," I answered, "and as far as we can tell, only two people could have had anything like a motive."

"Wife and boyfriend?" put in Taylor quickly.

"Yes, sir," I said. "Carson's wife, Doreen, left him recently, and ran off with a chap named Fred Skinner. From what they say about Carson, nobody could blame her—though there's no doubt that Carson was pretty upset when she ran out on him."

"What sort of people are they—this Doreen Carson and Fred Skinner?" Taylor enquired.

"They make a good impression, sir, and I quite like them both," I admitted. "Neither of them looks the killing kind."

Taylor smiled thinly at me. "They never do."

I colored slightly and added: "They had been expecting that Carson would ultimately divorce his wife and cite Fred Skinner as the co-respondent."

As Superintendent Taylor nodded thoughtfully, one of my co-sergeants named Ted Mills came in with a small package.

"These are the photo prints you were waiting for," Mills said. "The ones we found in Carson's camera."

"Thanks Ted," I said, snatching them eagerly. I was delighted to note they had enlarged up very well. The original contact-prints couldn't have been bigger than postage-stamps.

Thumbing through them quickly, I presently gave vent to an excited whistle. Taylor gave me a quizzical look.

"Well, this looks like a turn up for the book, sir," I said, handing the super a print. "Enough to charge Fred Skinner with the murder, if I'm not mistaken."

The photo had been taken by Carson as he sat on the couch where we found him. It showed Carson's fireplace and the mirror which hung above it. Reflected in the mirror was the door behind Carson's head.

And framed in the doorway was Fred Skinner. In Skinner's hand was a gun.

Two or three days later, returning to the Yard from another case, I bumped into Detective-Sergeant Mills. He caught my arm and said: "By

the way, pal, they've set Fred Skinner free again."

I blinked at him. "I'm very pleased," I said. "I never did picture Skinner as a candidate for the hot seat. But how did he get into the clear?"

"Better ask Inspector Dodds that one," Mills suggested. "The case has been his special pigeon. He's in a rare good mood about it all."

I discovered that Mills was absolutely right. When I tracked down Inspector Dodds, he actually offered me a cigarette. He only did this when he felt pleased.

"It's as I always said," he began. "You can't assume a darned thing in our game...not a darned thing."

Blowing a cloud of smoke, he went on: "In actual fact, Carson *did* shoot himself. He had already threatened to do so. And when he did commit suicide, he deliberately made it look fishy, to start us thinking—using his left hand, shooting himself from a queer angle so as to..."

The inspector leaned forward. "This is how it happened. Carson hated Skinner, his wife's lover. He wanted Skinner to be accused of murder."

He raised his hand as I was about to speak. "I know what you're going to say. There was the *proof* of that photo—of

Skinner standing behind him with a gun. "So Carson took his picture.

"Well, listen: Skinner belongs to a revolver-shooting club. Recently Carson visited the club's range while Skinner was there, and had his camera. He took a picture of Skinner with the gun in his hand. You might not be surprised to hear that the club afterwards found a gun missing. It seems clear that Carson walked off with it.

"And the next step? He made a blown-up print of Skinner's picture. A clever piece of 'scaling.' When the cut-out was pasted to the mirror over Carson's mantel, it exactly fitted into the reflection of the doorway—giving the impression Skinner stood there with the gun.

He then removed the blown-up print from the mirror and burned it. He used the gun shown in the picture to kill himself. The rest of it was up to the Yard, and it would be the high jump for Skinner...so he thought."

Inspector Dodds smiled. "But he overlooked something. The overcoat Skinner was wearing in the photo had an unusual check design.

"Two days before Carson was shot, Skinner took that coat to the cleaners. *It was still at the cleaners the day Carson died.* As a matter of fact, I got the ticket from Skinner and went round and collected the coat myself."

MIKE SHAYNE Presents Next Month's Three Headliners:

DEATH IN THE CRYSTAL BALL by BRETT HALLIDAY
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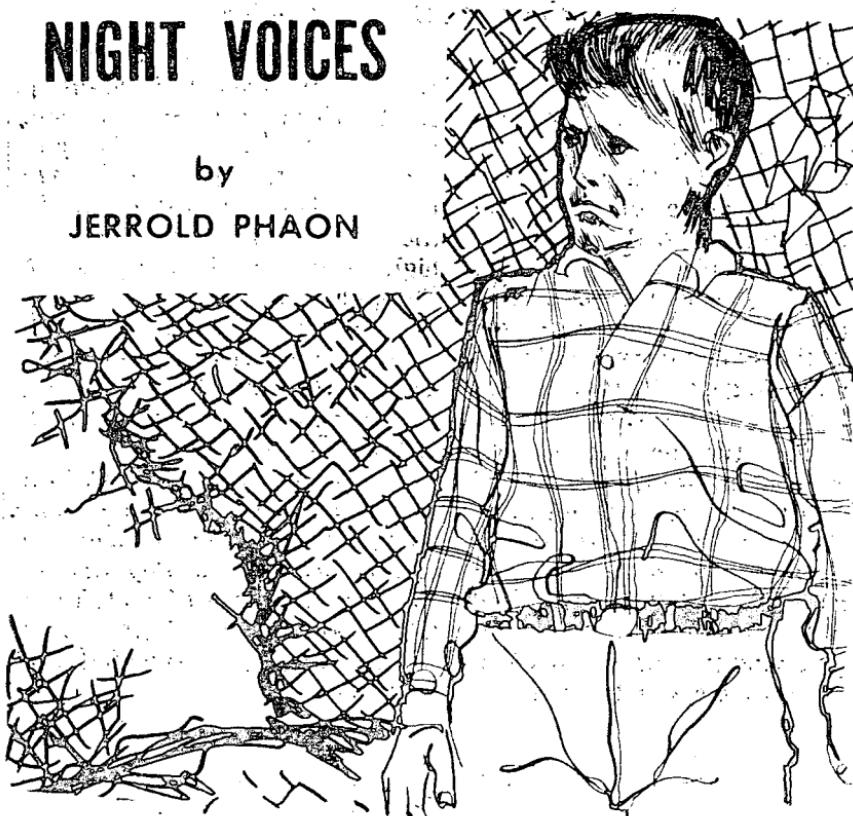
THE SNATCH OF SHIRLEY KALE by DAVID MAZROFF
A New Short Novel Introducing Rick Harper

THE ADVENTURE AT HEATH CREST by R. AUSTIN FREEMAN
A Martin Hewitt Classic

NIGHT VOICES

by

JERROLD PHAON



Always, at night, he heard it—the girl's voice summoning him to hell.

JOE DVORICH leaned forward on his chair. "I'm telling you, Doc," he said. "These voices I been hearing are real." On his sallow, sunken face were the signs of the strain he was under. His thin, pitted cheeks flexed with worry.

"I can't make it go away," he whined. "It's driving me nuts, Doc. You got to do something for me."

The doctor settled back in his chair and clasped his hands behind his head. He looked directly at Joe Dvorich.

"What exactly is it you hear, Joe?"

"This voice, mainly. I keep hearing it inside my head. It comes at night. 'Joe,' it says. 'Joe, are you ready?' It always starts out like that. I can hear it plain as anything. I asked Anderson if he heard it."

"What did Anderson say?" the doctor asked.

Joe Dvorich looked at the floor. He shook his head slowly back and forth. "He didn't hear it."

"Mmm," the doctor said. "Is that all you heard? 'Are you ready, Joe?'"

"Sometimes it's different," Joe Dvorich said. "Sometimes it says, 'I'm coming, Joe. Are you ready? I'm coming.' And I hear music too."

"What kind of music?"

"Organ music," Joe Dvorich said. Then his voice slipped a notch when he added, "Funeral music."

"This voice you hear always calls you by name?"

"Yeah."

The doctor shook his head sadly. "Strain," he said. "This hallucination is from the severe strain you're under."

"Listen, Doc, this voice I been hearing is no hallucination. I can hear it; I tell you."

"Of course you can hear it. You can hear it in your subconscious. That's why

Anderson couldn't hear it. It's all in your mind, Joe."

"Are you trying to tell me I'm going crazy?"

"I'm trying to help you, Joe. I'm trying to help you understand what this thing is." "I don't want to understand it. I only want it to go away."

"Listen, Joe. You've recently undergone a very nerve-wracking experience. Your emotions are all played out. What you need is a lot of rest."

"That's all I get in this joint. Rest. What else is there?"

"You might as well make the most of it," the doctor said.

Joe Dvorich curled his lips and glared at the doctor.

"You ain't even gonna try and help me," he said. "Sure. Why should you bother? The way you figure, it's all up for Joe Dvorich anyway. Ain't that right, Doc?"

They took him back then and he lay on his cot. He faced the wall and held his hands tightly over his ears. He was in a cold sweat, waiting for the voice to come again. That was the hell of it. He kept waiting for it, always waiting, and the waiting was wrecking him. The voice never came when he waited. It always came just as he was dropping off to sleep.

Are you ready, Joe?

"Let me alone!"

I'm coming, Joe. Are you ready?

He buried his face into the pillow and screamed, "Go away!" But the voice didn't go away. He kept hearing it, over and over, inside his head. He started banging his head against the wall to get rid of it.

Anderson came in and held him down. Then others came to help Anderson, and they took him down to the doctor. The doctor had them strap him into a tub of circulating water. There was canvas over the tub and only his head stuck out. He couldn't move. He kept screaming, kept trying to drown out the voice.

"I never thought I'd see the day old Joe Dvorich begged for mercy," one of the attendants said.

After they let him out of the tub he knew it was hopeless to put up a fight. There was nothing he could do. He simply gave up and lay on his cot, waiting.

He closed his eyes and let himself drift. When he saw the little girl, he made his mind keep moving. He didn't want to see the little girl. He didn't want to see any of it. But he kept circling over the little girl and far off, way way in the back of his mind, he kept

hearing the voice, *I'm coming, Joe, I'm coming coming coming coming...*

"Are you ready, Joe?"

He blinked open his eyes. Anderson was waiting for him. He slid his legs off the cot and sat up. He rubbed his eyes.

"Is it time now?"

"Yes, it's time," Anderson said. "Five o'clock."

"I'm glad," Joe Dvorich said. "I'm glad it'll be over soon. I wonder why they always have executions so early in the morning?" He blinked at Anderson and gave a short, mirthless laugh. "I guess it's so you don't have to spend the whole day wondering and waiting. If they only knew."

"The priest is waiting. Do you want to see him?"

"No." He went over to the barred window and looked out. It was starting to get light. "Just tell him I didn't mean to kill her," Joe Dvorich said. "The little girl. She shouldn't have been playing in front of the bank. We didn't count on that when the job was planned." He turned and looked at Anderson. "I'm sorry about that."

"It's too late now," Anderson said.

"I know," Joe Dvorich said. "I'm coming."

SO YOUNG, SO FAIR, SO DEAD

*She stood there, all I had loved and
wanted and lost. I felt the gun.
One last thing I could do. . . .*

by JOHN LUTZ

YOU CAN LIVE your life through and try hard to be a decent sort, but trouble might still come to you. That's the way it seems to have been with me. My trouble was never the direct result of what I did, but the product of others. Neighbors especially. My advice is, don't ever get too friendly with your neighbors. I had to learn that the hard way.

Adelaide and I finished moving into our new house on a Sunday. That Monday I managed to stay away from the office and helped her sort the contents of cardboard boxes and move furniture about. We were both very happy that day, for we'd worked and saved for a long time to be able to afford our own home built here in the beautiful rolling hills south of the smoke-palled city. Here the

air was clear as crystal and the view was the best nature had to offer.

And the house itself was what we'd always wanted. Though not large, it was well built with excellent materials and designed with a tasteful touch of miniature elegance. Adelaide and I took a walk around our green property before dark that evening and admired the way the wood shingled house seemed to blend so well with the forest-like setting.

Of course the best thing about the house and the property was that it was ours. I'd worked hard to build up my own mail order business, Smathers Enterprises, and Mr. and Mrs. Will Smathers were comparatively well heeled for a couple in their early thirties



who'd started married life on practically nothing.

Adelaide stopped strolling and gazed down the narrow blacktop road that fronted our property. I stood off and admired her delicate features

and shining blonde hair, the weight of her lithe, graceful body resting on one slender leg. Adelaide, too, blended well with the natural surroundings. She was a natural beauty, the type makeup couldn't improve.

"I wonder about our neighbor," she said.

I moved next to her, slipping my arm about her waist. From where we stood we could see the nearest home through a break in the heavy green of the trees. A large brick home with a swimming pool behind it, it was the only house within a mile of us in either direction. I could just see the top of a small beach house near the pool. Within plain view near the attached two car garage was a long, expensive blue convertible.

"Whoever our neighbor is," I said, "he has money."

"It certainly looks that way."

"On the other hand, he may be mortgaged up to his neck."

We stood for a moment longer looking down at the big house before going back inside. I say looking down because our home was situated high on one of the hills, and the blacktop road snaked sharply downward for the next two or three miles as it meandered like a still tributary to the Red Fox River.

I suppose I had no business saying anything about how our neighbor might have his property mortgaged. We'd gone into debt heavily to buy our own home. But the business was going well, and promised to continue to do so, and there was no reason we shouldn't be

happy now and pay as we went along.

And in a way owing on the house could be a good thing. Once we were in it I knew we'd never give it up unless we absolutely had to, and it might serve as a spur to help make me work even harder.

But all the house motivated me to do that day was leave the office early so I could get home to enjoy living there with Adelaide. As I drove up the winding driveway I wondered when I'd get over the feeling that this was someone else's charming home I was approaching and not my own.

Adelaide knew I was coming home early and had dinner in the oven. She fixed us each a drink while we were waiting and we sat in the disarranged living room.

"I don't know when we'll ever get things the way we want them," Adelaide said, glancing around at the mess.

I grinned at her and took a sip of my Scotch and water, admiring her fresh good looks in the plain housedress she did so much for. "There's plenty of time."

"I suppose so." She sighed with contentment and settled back in her chair. "I saw our neighbor today," she said.

"Did he drop by to introduce himself?"

"No, but you can see the house from our bedroom window upstairs. When I looked out this afternoon I noticed a man swimming in the pool. He had a guest, a girl in a purple bikini who stayed there most of the day, then drove away in a little sports car."

I had to laugh. If Adelaide had any faults at all, one of them would be that she was a trifle nosy. "Are you going to start a dossier on them?" I asked jokingly.

"Not yet," she said with a smile. "And it's not 'them', it's 'him'. The man seems to live there alone."

"Big house for a single man," I remarked, "though it sounds like he has his fun there."

A timer bell sounded in the kitchen and Adelaide put down her drink and stood. I walked behind her as she hurried into the kitchen to check on the dinner.

"You keep an eye on him and keep me posted," I said, rubbing the back of my hand playfully up the nape of her neck. She didn't answer and I kept quiet. Experience had taught me to joke only so far about Adelaide's feminine curiosity.

Though without any prompting she had another tidbit of information for me the

next evening when I returned home.

"Our neighbor seems to be something of a swinger," she said. "There was a girl in a red bikini there today."

"Same girl, different bikini," I speculated.

Adelaide shook her head. "The first one was a tall brunette. Today it was a short blonde."

I smiled and shrugged. "His sister?"

"I doubt it," Adelaide said, and drew a miniature bronze rooster from the carton.

"I'm sure we'll find out more about him," I said. "He'll probably turn up at our door one of these days soon to introduce himself. Could be he doesn't even realize there's anybody living here yet." Silently I wondered if he'd plant a shade tree between us and his pool when he did find out. Then for the next few hours I was busy helping Adelaide finish the job of unpacking and thought about little else.

But that night my own curiosity about our neighbor was aroused when I walked across the bedroom to close the drapes.

As my hand reached for the pull cord my eye caught the flash of a revolving red light in the distance. I leaned forward and squinted into the darkness,

and I saw that a police car was parked in our neighbor's driveway beside his long blue convertible.

As I watched another car pulled up behind that one. In the reflection of its headlights I could see that it was a plain gray sedan. Two men got out of it and went into the house without knocking.

A hand touched my shoulder and Adelaide was standing beside me.

"Now who's nosy?" she asked.

I didn't answer, and we stood there for a while and watched shadows cross the distant draped windows. Then the two men and a uniformed policeman came out of the house. They got into their respective cars, the red light on the patrol car was turned off, and both cars left together. A few minutes later the windows of the house went black and Adelaide and I were staring at nothing.

"What do you think?" Adelaide asked as we turned away from the window.

"It could have been a lot of things," I said. "Maybe the police were called because somebody was sick. Maybe the two men in the plain car were doctors. Maybe our neighbor thought he saw a prowler. I guess if we really wanted to

find out the thing to do would be to ask him."

THE NEXT evening I got in the car and drove down the road to do just that.

"It's because I'm a burglar," our neighbor answered me amiably.

I stood there and blinked, twice. I'd introduced myself when he'd answered the door, and he'd introduced himself as Jack Hogan and invited me inside and offered me a drink. After a few minute's exploratory conversation with the tanned and handsome man, I'd gotten around to asking him about the commotion at his house we'd witnessed last night, offering our help if anything was wrong.

"The police were here to harass me," Jack Hogan went on. "Lieutenant Faber and his friends. I humor the lieutenant because I understand he acts out of frustration."

"But if you're innocent—" I said in a rather dumbfounded way.

"But I'm not innocent," Hogan said freely, his gray eyes as sincere as his voice. "Though if you tell anyone I said so I'll deny it. Lieutenant Faber knows I'm guilty, but he can't do anything about it because I'm too smart for him. That's the fun of it."

I didn't know if Hogan was joking or not. When I took a sip of my drink some of it spilled on my hand.

"A burglary was committed a few nights ago," Hogan said, offering me his neatly folded handkerchief to dry my fingers. "They know I did it but they don't know how, or what I did with the loot. Oh, they come and search here every now and then, but we both know they won't find anything. And if a young lady is prepared to testify that I spent the time of the robbery in her presence, where does it all leave poor Lieutenant Faber?"

"Where I am, I suppose," I said. "Confused."

"Well, no need to be confused. I say what's the sense of getting away with something if nobody knows about it? Surely you can understand that. Then too, there's the profit. Burglary is a thriving business. How else could I afford all this, living alone in a ten-room house with a pool, nights on the town, flashy women, flashy cars? A wonderful life. I admit to you, I need all that."

"Then, in a way, it's all a game," I said slowly.

"Of course it's a game. Everybody plays his own game I just admit mine because I'm good enough to get by with it even though it is illegal."



"But it's wrong," I said, trying to bat down his clearly stated logic.

"Sure, it's wrong," Hogan said, "but so's cheating on your income tax, overcharging the public if you're a big corporation, leaving a penny for a paper when you don't have a dime. To tell you the truth, I don't worry about right or wrong."

"I guess you don't."

"You see," Hogan explained earnestly, "it's the challenge. I like nice things; I indulge myself. When I see something of value I take it. I guess I have to take it."

"Kleptomania on a grand scale, huh?"

"Hey, you might say that!" He raised his glass and grinned.

I finished my drink and got up to leave. Hogan walked with me to the door. On the porch I noticed that the long blue convertible was gone, replaced by an even longer and more expensive tan convertible.

Hogan saw me looking at the car.

"Don't worry," he said. "It's not stolen and it doesn't belong to a girl I have hidden in the house. You didn't interrupt anything and I can afford to trade cars any time I feel like it. Say," he said, pointing at the long car, "how do you like it?"

"Beautiful," I said.

"Sure, and it cost a hunk of cash. Well, drop by again, why don't you? Bring the wife and we'll take a dip in the pool."

I walked down the driveway to where my car was parked. I didn't know what to think of our new neighbor. I was sure he wasn't joking, and I must admit I reacted as a lot of people would react. There was a sense of resentment in me that the things I worked so hard for, this man simply went out and took. And yet I found that I couldn't really dislike Jack Hogan. I waved to him as I started the engine and drove away.

When I told Adelaide about the visit she didn't believe me. I didn't blame her.

"You'd have to talk to him to understand how he thinks," I told her. "You might describe him as an honest crook."

"An honest crook?"

"Well, honest about being crooked, anyway."

That confused Adelaide almost as much as I was

confused, so I had a snack, went over some work I'd brought home then went to bed.

Neither Adelaide or myself mentioned our neighbor for a while as we busied ourselves about our new home. Though I noticed that Adelaide kept a pair of binoculars in the bedroom now, and she often left the house to drive past the Hogan residence and look more closely at it, I suppose to check for bikini clad guests and sports cars. Still, I don't think she really completely believed what I'd told her about Jack Hogan until Lieutenant Faber called on us one Saturday afternoon.

Adelaide and I were working in the garden she'd planted when the lieutenant drove up in his gray sedan. I stood leaning on my hoe and watched him approach. He was a harried looking man who appeared to be in his mid-forties. His straight graying hair was combed to the side over his forehead and the breeze mussed it as his lined face broke into its emotionless, professional smile. Even before he introduced himself I knew who he was.

"I hope we haven't done anything wrong," Adelaide said, returning the bland smile with one that shone.

"Wrong? No," Lieutenant Faber said. "Actually I'm a city

detective and have no authority out here in the county anyway."

"And yet you drove out here to talk to us," I said thoughtfully.

"I don't speak officially, Mr. Smathers," Faber said in his tired, hoarse voice. "Anything I say to you folks is off the record." He got out a cigar and lit it expertly against the breeze. "How you getting along with your neighbor down the road?"

"You mean the burglar?" I'd decided it was time to stop circling.

"You said it, not me," Lieutenant Faber said.

"Actually Mr. Hogan said it. He didn't seem to mind admitting that fact to me at all."

"Oh, he admits it, all right," the lieutenant said in a voice suddenly filled with frustration, "but not to anybody who can do anything about it or prove he even said it. I could tell you some things about your neighbor that would really surprise you."

"You mean he really *is* a burglar?" Adelaide asked suddenly.

"Ask him," Lieutenant Faber said. "He'll tell you. Not that we can get anything on him. We know but we can't prove."

"He told me he was clever," I said.

Lieutenant Faber nodded bitterly. "He's been clever enough so far. We know exactly how he operates—in fact, he always seems to go to some trouble to let us know he's the one who pulled his jobs, but pinning him down's another thing. He gets rid of the loot so fast and secretly we can't get him there, and usually he knows where to find big sums of cash that can't be traced. As far as alibis are concerned, there's always some girl who's willing to testify that he was with her at his house or her apartment or some motel. We can't watch him twenty-four hours a day." The lieutenant added with an undeniable touch of envy, "He seems to have an endless supply of girls."

"He is rather handsome," Adelaide said, and when we looked at her she blushed slightly. "I mean, he would be to a certain type of woman."

"The type he's handsome to will lie for him," Faber said, "that's for sure. He must have something working for him."

"Money," I said. "If used properly money will buy almost anything, and Hogan strikes me as the kind who knows how to use his wealth."

"That'd be okay," Lieutenant Faber said, "only it's

other people's wealth. Just last week we know—off the record, of course—that he burglarized over three thousand in cash and five thousand in loot from the home of J. Grestom, president of Grestom Chemical."

"Isn't that the plant about four miles from here?" Adelaide asked. "The one that dumps all that sludge into the Red Fox River?"

"The same," Lieutenant Faber said, "one of the biggest operations of its kind in the state."

"Sounds like Robin Hood," I remarked.

"Yeah," the lieutenant said without amusement, "Hogan steals from the rich, only he doesn't give to anybody."

"From talking to him," I said, "my impression is that it's all a big game to him."

"A game where other people get hurt, and a game I'm tired of playing. Hogan's a crook like all crooks. He's one of the world's takers. He's a kid and the world's one big candy shop with a dumb proprietor."

I thought good manners dictated me not pointing out who that dumb proprietor must be in Hogan's mind.

"Do you think you ever will catch him?" Adelaide asked.

Lieutenant Faber nodded. "We always do in the end. He'll make a mistake, and we'll be

there to notice when he does."

"He seemed awfully confident," I said.

"Confident?" Faber snorted with disgust. "Confident's not the word. Brass is more like it! About six months ago he burglarized the payroll office of a company downtown when their safe was full—"

"You mean he's a safe-cracker too?" I interrupted.

"No, he stole the whole blasted safe. It was one of those little boxes that should have been bolted to the floor from the inside but wasn't. The worst thing is that two nights later the safe turned up empty in the middle of a place that manufactures burglar alarms—bolted to the floor!"

"It really is a game with him, isn't it?" I said.

Adelaide was laughing quietly. "You must admit he's good at his game."

"And we're good at ours!" The lieutenant's face was flushed.

"I'm sure you didn't drive up here just to inform us that we're living next to a police character," I said. By that time I was certain I'd figured out the reason for Lieutenant Faber's visit. I was right.

"What I'd like," he said, "is for you to sort of keep an eye on Hogan's house. Not spy, mind you, just keep an eye on."

He drew on his cigar and awaited an answer.

I took a lazy swat at the earth with the edge of the hoe blade. "I don't see anything wrong with us telling you if anything odd goes on there," I said, "under the circumstances."

Faber exhaled smoke and handed me a white card with his name and telephone extension number. "Hogan's not used to having neighbors," he said. "That's why he bought the house he's in. He might forget about you and make a slip. Do you have a pair of binoculars or a telescope?"

I looked at Adelaide and winked so the lieutenant couldn't see me. "I think I have an old pair somewhere." That somewhere was on the edge of Adelaide's dresser, where the powerful field glasses could be used by her at a moment's notice.

"Well, it's been nice to meet you folks," Lieutenant Faber said, "and it's good of you to help. Your police department thanks you." Again he shot us his mechanical smile then turned and walked toward his car.

Adelaide and I stood and watched until he'd turned from the driveway and was gone from sight.

"Now you can really play

Mata Hari," I said, going back to my hoeing.

Adelaide didn't answer as she bent down and applied the spade to the broken ground.

I LEFT THE spying—as I'd come to think of it—pretty much up to Adelaide. She spent a lot of time sitting at the bedroom window, her elbows resting on the sill as she peered intently through the field glasses. But at the end of two weeks she hadn't noticed anything really noteworthy, just the comings and goings of a high living young bachelor of wealth.

She was sitting concentrating through the glasses one afternoon when the doorbell chimed. I rose from where I was lying on the bed reading and went downstairs to answer it.

When the door swung open there was Jack Hogan, dressed in swimming trunks and smiling, with a brightly colored striped towel slung about his neck.

"How about taking me up on that swimming invitation now?" he asked. "The temperature's over ninety, so I thought it'd be a good time."

I was a little surprised to see him, a little off balance. "Uh, sure, if it's okay with Adelaide." I stepped back. "Come on in and I'll ask her."

When I went upstairs Adelaide was still at the window with her eyes pressed to the binoculars.

"Jack Hogan's downstairs," I said. "He wants to know if we'll go swimming with him in his pool."

Adelaide turned abruptly and looked up at me, her eyes wide and appearing even wider due to the red circles about them left by the binoculars. "But I thought he was in his beach house! I've been waiting for him to come out!"

"You'll wait a long time, darling. He's in our living room. Do you want to go?"

"Swimming? Do you?"

"I don't see why we shouldn't. It is a hot day." I changed quickly into my swimming trunks and went downstairs to tell Jack Hogan we'd be ready to go as soon as Adelaide had changed.

Adelaide had on her skimpiest black bikini when she came downstairs. I saw Hogan look with something like momentary shock at her tanned and shapely body.

This was the first time they'd met, at least close up. After introductions we drove Hogan's house in his long tan convertible. Seated beside him was an amply proportioned blonde who looked as if she might have been used to model

the car on TV. He introduced her as Prudence, which I didn't think fitted, and we were on our way.

As we splashed around, drank highballs and got better acquainted, I found that I liked Jack Hogan, though I must still admit to some jealousy and distaste that he could come by all he had so easily while I worked so hard for less. What surprised me was that Adelaide seemed to like Hogan too. Adelaide had had a father who'd deserted her, who'd been much like Hogan, free spending and dishonest. She had hated him until the day he died, perhaps still hated his memory. And yet from time to time I could see some of her father in Adelaide, under the surface of the careful, thrifty and loving woman she really was. I saw some of that wildness and daring now as she stood on Hogan's tanned shoulders and let him flip her out and into the deep water.

When we got out of the pool and went inside for snacks I noticed an expensive looking, lewd silver statuette of Bacchus on a low table in the entrance hall. It could hardly escape my attention because Jack Hogan flicked it with his finger as we walked past.

"I stole that earlier this year," he said, "or rather one

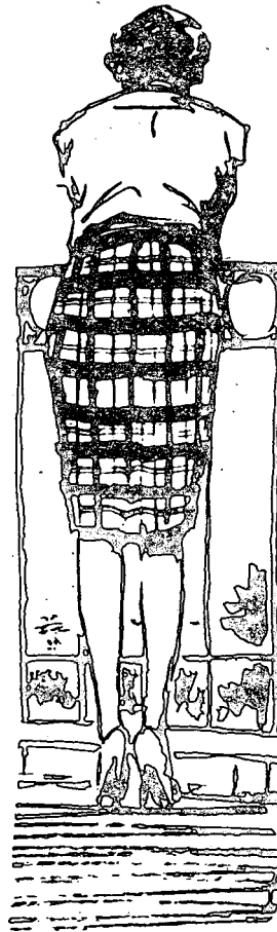
ust like it. The stolen one had he owner's name engraved on he bottom, so I sold it and used the proceeds to buy this exact duplicate. Lieutenant Faber really thought he had me when he discovered that statue sitting there, but when we checked for the owner's engraving it wasn't there, and I could hardly have removed it without my trace. It drove the ieutenant almost wild." Hogan chuckled as he led us into the arge kitchen with an attached dining area.

"I don't think I've ever met anyone like you," Adelaide said to Hogan with a bewildered little laugh.

Prudence, the busty blonde, popped a potato chip with cheese dip into her mouth. "Oh, there isn't anyone else like Jackie!"

I could only agree as I mixed myself another highball.

From the time of the little impromptu swimming party on, I began to notice things. It seemed to me that Adelaide spent more and more time spying from the window for Lieutenant Faber. And she found excuses to drive into the city more and more often. And on occasions when I came home from work I noticed that her hair near the base of her skull appeared damp. Did I only imagine the faint scent of



chlorine those evenings as she served dinner?

It seemed, too, that Adelaide and I were caught up in more and more domestic quarrels, and we'd seldom quarreled before. She accused me of having ignored her through the

years, spending all my free time and weekends working.

It didn't take long for me to be ninety percent sure that Adelaide and Jack Hogan were conducting an affair behind my back. But would I ever be more than ninety percent sure? Hogan managed his love life as he did his burglaries, with such practiced skill that the victims of his callousness could only suspect but never prove, maybe not even to themselves. For a long time I deliberated before taking any action.

There was never any doubt in my mind that I would take some sort of action. I couldn't allow things to go on as they were, and I felt confident that I could do something about them. A man who's hard to best in business is hard to best in any other phase of life.

What I finally did was go to see Lieutenant Faber.

The lieutenant's office was small, littered and dirty. There were no windows, and dented gray file cabinets stood behind the cluttered desk where Lieutenant Faber sat. As I entered he glanced up with his uneasy, weary look—then managed to smile at me.

"Have a seat, Mr. Smathers," he said, motioning toward a chair with a tooth-marked yellow pencil. "I take it you've come here because you know

something about Jack Hogan." I couldn't help but notice the hope in his voice.

"In a way that's why I'm here," I said, and watched the wariness creep into the lieutenant's narrow eyes as he settled back in his desk chair.

"What is it that you observed?" he asked.

"Nothing that really pertains to his burglaries, Lieutenant. In fact, nothing of use to you at all."

Faber let the pencil drop onto the desk top with a resonant little clatter. "Why don't we talk straight to each other, Mr. Smathers? Save time, yours as well as mine."

"All right, I came here to ask you for a favor."

"Favor?" His gray eyebrows rose slowly.

"Yes," I said, "I wonder if you could arrange for me to have some infra red binoculars. I think most of what goes on at Hogan's house happens after dark, and it would help if I could see through that darkness."

Lieutenant Faber rolled his tongue to one side of his mouth and looked thoughtful. "Seems like a good idea," he said. "I can get you the field glasses within a few days."

"Fine. Should I pick them up here?"

"If you'd like." Lieutenant

Faber looked even more thoughtful. "What is it you think you're going to see at night?" he asked.

I shrugged. "Who knows? That's why I want the infra red binoculars." I stood to leave.

"I'll give you a telephone call when you can pick them up," the lieutenant said, standing behind his desk.

"Call me at my office," I told him, "anytime during the day."

"Why not your home?"

"Because my office would be more convenient."

He came from around the desk and walked with me to the door. "Mr. Smathers," he said in a confidential voice, "I want Jack Hogan any way I can get him. Do you understand?"

"I thought you wanted him that badly," I said as I went out.

THAT VERY evening, when I awoke after dozing off while watching television, I found a gold cigarette lighter beneath the sofa cushions. During my sleep my hand had gotten itself wedged between the cushions, and when I freed it my fingertips had just brushed the hard, smooth surface.

When I rolled back the cushion I saw the lighter, with the initials J. H. engraved on it. I knew it would also have J.

H.'s fingerprints on it, so I lifted it gently by the corners and slipped it into my breast pocket before Adelaide came into the room.

Lieutenant Faber telephoned my office in the middle of the week to say I could drop by headquarters and pick up the infra red binoculars. So I wouldn't waste any valuable working time, I drove to see him on my lunch hour.

The binoculars were in a small case sitting on the edge of his desk. I sat down and examined them and he shoved a receipt across the desk top for me to sign.

"You suspect Jack Hogan is seeing your wife, don't you?" he said in a testing voice.

I didn't look at him as I hastily scrawled my signature on the pink receipt. "Yes, and I want to know for sure."

"And what happens if you do find out they're seeing each other?"

I handed the receipt back to him and rested the binoculars in my lap. "What would happen if a burglary was committed and evidence pointing to Hogan was found at the scene?"

"Then all we'd have to worry about would be breaking down his customary alibi."

"And if he had no alibi? If he was actually home alone at the time of the burglary but

couldn't prove it because of a witness's testimony that he saw him leave then return?"

Lieutenant Faber ran his tongue over his dry lips. "That's why I've been waiting for, only Hogan has never dropped a clue in his life."

Gingerly I reached into my pocket and dropped the gold cigarette lighter with Jack Hogan's initials onto Faber's desk. As he reached for it I grabbed his hand.

"I think you'll find it has Hogan's fingerprints on it."

Lieutenant Faber leaned back away from the cigarette lighter as if it were something that might explode. I saw his glance dart to his office door to make sure it was closed, and at that moment I was very sure of him.

"Where did you get it?" he asked.

"Under the sofa cushions in my home."

"And you're giving it to me?"

I nodded. "And I don't require a receipt."

Lieutenant Faber slowly unwrapped the cellophane wrapper from one of his cigars. As he held a match to the cigar he looked at me over the rising and falling flame. Then he flattened the cellophane wrapper, slid it deftly beneath the gold lighter and placed both

lighter and cellophane in his desk drawer.

"For the next three weekends," I said, "I plan to tell my wife I have to leave town on business from Thursday evening until Monday morning. Instead I'll stay at a motel outside of town, and I'll spend my nights on a hillside watching Hogan's house."

"From Thursday night to Monday morning," Lieutenant Faber repeated slowly.

"When you find the right burglary case, call me at the motel, and I'll tell you if Hogan was home alone that night. Then you 'discover' the lighter at the scene of the crime and I testify that I saw Hogan drive away and that he was gone during the time the robbery was committed."

"One thing," Lieutenant Faber said. "What if . . . ?"

"That's possible," I told him, "but Adelaide will hardly be in a position to say she was at Hogan's house all night, will she? Especially considering the fact that she knows he's a burglar anyway and deserves to be caught. She can't afford to be like his swinging single alibis."

Lieutenant Faber nodded and I stood and carefully tucked the binocular case beneath my arm.

"I'll let you know what

motel I'll be staying at," I said to him as I started to leave.

"Smathers." He stopped me. "I want you to know I'm doing this because of what I think of Hogan. He's a—"

And the lieutenant told me in the purplest language I'd ever heard just what he thought of Jack Hogan.

I will say Adelaide put on a good act. When I told her about my upcoming business trips she acted convincingly upset by the idea of being left alone. She even stood in the doorway and waved wistfully after me as I got into a cab for the drive to the airport.

Only I didn't go to the airport. I had the cabbie drive me to a car rental agency where I rented a compact sedan. Then I drove to Sleepy Dan's Motel and checked in. If I worked it right, I could write all this off as business expenses. And I was smart enough to have set up a plan that would require me to miss only three days, Fridays, in three weeks at the office. I could even sneak in and do some work on Sunday when no one was there if need be. I congratulated myself on my cleverness as I lay down to get a little sleep before sunset.

The spot I'd picked was perfect; a small clearing on the side of a hill from where I could look directly down at Hogan's

large house and grounds. The powerful binoculars brought everything near to me, and the infra red lenses eliminated the darkness as a problem. The night was warm, and I unbuttoned my shirt and settled back to watch until morning.

There were no results that first week. Lieutenant Faber sounded disappointed when I told him on the phone of Jack Hogan's activities. A burglary had been committed that would have been perfect for our purposes, but I had to tell him that at the time Hogan wasn't home and I didn't know where he'd gone. Lieutenant Faber suggested hopefully that he might have gone to my house, but I quickly told him he could rule that out. My house was in view from where I watched also. We decided to wait for an opportunity we could be absolutely sure of.

The second week that I stationed myself on the hillside something did happen. My wife's affair with Jack Hogan was confirmed beyond even the slightest doubt.

It was about midnight when I saw the headlights turn from the road into Hogan's driveway. As I pressed the binoculars to my eyes and adjusted the focus dial, I saw that it was Adelaide's car that had pulled

into Hogan's big double garage to park alongside his convertible. He stepped out onto the porch and met her, and they kissed for an embarrassingly long time before going inside. A few hours later I saw them emerge from the house and go for a late night swim. I didn't want to watch that, so I lowered the binoculars and sat feeling the numbness in me give way to a smoldering rage.

The next night nothing happened. Hogan spent the entire night alone, going to bed about ten o'clock. I suppose he was tired.

That afternoon Lieutenant Faber called me at the motel. A residence in the west end had been burglarized the night before, smoothly and professionally. There were no clues of any kind.

I told him that Hogan had spent the night home alone. The burglary had to have taken place during the early morning hours, so we agreed that I would say I saw Hogan leave in his convertible at two thirty a.m. and return at five. Tomorrow morning, when Lieutenant Faber returned to question the victim and re-examine the scene of the crime, he would 'find' the gold lighter, and the frame around Jack Hogan would be complete.

There was really no reason

to go back that third night, but the silent rage had grown in me along with my curiosity. And I suppose it gave me some small sense of power, to be able to watch them without them knowing. It kept me from being a complete fool, and while Hogan didn't know it, he had only one more night of freedom.

ALL THAT dark, hot night Adelaide didn't arrive at Hogan's home. The windows of the big ranch house were dark, the grounds silent. Around me the crickets chirped madly as if protesting the heat as I sat staring intently through the binoculars.

Then a light came on in one of the windows, the window I knew to be Jack Hogan's bedroom. After a while a downstairs light came on too, and both lights stayed on. I looked at my watch. Four-thirty.

He must have telephoned her. At twenty to five Adelaide turned her car into Hogan's driveway. This time after she pulled her car into the garage Hogan came out and lowered the door, for the sun would soon rise. I watched as he put his arm around her and they went into the house.

The sun came up amid orange streaks on the horizon,

turning the heat of night into an even more intense heat.

Then I heard a door slam off in the distance, and I scanned, then focused the binoculars on Adelaide in her skimpy black bikini. Hogan was beside her with a towel draped over his shoulder. He flicked her playfully with the towel and she laughed and dived into the pool, and he laughed and jumped in after her.

I watched them for about twenty minutes before I came to my decision.

Jack Hogan had always freely admitted being a burglar. Now I intended to play his game, to tell him openly what was going to happen to him, so that he'd know he'd been outsmarted. Let the knowledge that he couldn't prove his innocence torment him. Let him suffer as he'd made Lieutenant Faber suffer, as he'd made his burglary victims suffer. As he'd made me suffer. I placed the binoculars in their case, stood and clambered down the hillside to where the car was parked.

Then it occurred to me that Hogan might give me a rough time once he realized he was cornered, so I drove by my house first and got my forty-five caliber revolver from my dresser drawer.

They were sitting in lounge

chairs alongside the pool when I approached, Adelaide leaning forward and Hogan rubbing suntan lotion onto her back.

"How's the water?" I asked calmly.

They whirled, surprised, then Hogan smiled. "It's great," he said jauntily. "I've invited Adelaide over here before for an early morning swim, but this is the first time she's come."

"I know better," I said, watching Adelaide trying to control the fear and guilt that marked her features. At last she managed a facsimile of a poker face.

"Know better?" Hogan was still playing innocent.

"Yes, and now there are a few things I want you to know. There was a burglary committed night before last in the west end. No clues yet."

Hogan appeared puzzled. "So what? I was home in bed all that night."

"For the last several weekends I've been spying on you from that hillside," I said. "Lieutenant Faber gave me infrared binoculars to use at night. I'm going to swear that I saw you leave and return at the time that burglary took place."

"You can't!" Adelaide said in a high voice.

"Quiet, dear." I looked again at Hogan. He was grinning.

"Your word against mine,

old pal. I've beat that one before."

"I believe you lost your initialed gold cigarette lighter," I said. "It has your fingerprints on it and it's going to be found at the scene of the crime."

Now anger showed on Hogan's handsome face. "By Lieutenant Faber, would be my guess."

"Your guess is correct. We're framing you and sending you to prison, to put it plainly."

"As I've always put it, huh?"

I nodded and couldn't help a faint, gloating smile. Hogan's game and he was getting beat at it. "Lieutenant Faber told me you were one of the world's takers," I said. "Well, I'm one of the world's keepers. I don't give up what I have easily."

"Faber was right about that," Hogan said frankly. "I'm a taker. I can't see something of value without taking it."

"Something like Adelaide?"

"Exactly."

"Your mistake," I said tauntingly, "was in trying to take something from me. I'll think of you from time to time when you're in prison." I turned to go home, leaving Adelaide to return when she felt like it.

"It won't work," her voice said behind me.

I turned around and saw that the fear and surprise had left

Adelaide's face completely to be replaced by a look of determination.

"And why won't it work?" I asked.

"Because I'll swear in court that I spent that entire night with Jack."

I started to laugh incredulously at her, but the laugh wouldn't come out. "But you were at home."

"Alone," Adelaide said. "You could never prove it. I'll swear I was here instead."

"You'd swear to that in a courtroom; under oath?" I stared at her, feeling the sun on the back of my moist shirt. "But why?"

"I don't think you'd understand."

"Now listen!"

"Nothing more to listen to, or say," Adelaide said, and as a pretense for getting away from me she turned and walked toward the diving board.

Hogan lowered himself into the shallow water with an infuriating smile. "Nothing more to say, old pal. Sorry." And he actually looked as if he might be sorry; the gracious winner.

The sun seemed to grow hotter, unbearably hot, sending beads of sweat darting down my flesh inside my shirt. I looked up and saw Adelaide poised gracefully on the end of

the diving board, tanned and beautiful in her tiny swimming suit as she carefully avoided a glance in my direction:

How the revolver got from my pocket into my hand I honestly don't know. I have no recollection of it, a magician's trick. And I don't remember pulling the trigger.

Adelaide was raising her arms, preparing to dive, when the gun roared in my hand as if of its own will. I saw Adelaide's body jerk, saw the spray of blood, heard the scream as she half fell-half jumped awkwardly from the diving board, arms and legs thrashing as she struck the water. Then there was a choking sound and she stopped thrashing and floated motionless face up.

Hogan stroked toward the ladder, a look not of shock or horror on his face, but an expression that suggested he might be very sick. "Oh, God, Smathers!" he said as he started to climb the chrome ladder. I let him get to the second step before blasting him back into the pool.

I stood there then, pulling the trigger automatically,

emptying the revolver into their bodies.

Considering how large the pool was, it was amazing how quickly all the water turned red.

So now I'm sitting here awaiting trial, writing this to kill time, though I'm sure the hour will come when I'll pray I had this time back. There isn't any doubt in my mind that I'll be convicted. They have my full confession, and now they'll have this.

What concerns me is that all my life I've tried to be a decent sort of man, hard working, industrious. I'm not very religious, but I have tried to live by the ten commandments, breaking them every now and then, of course, like everybody else. And yet if you went back and read over this again you could put your finger on spot after spot until you'd realize that between the four of us, me, Adelaide, Jack Hogan and Lieutenant Faber, in one way or another we've broken every single commandment.

Evil spreads, I suppose, like the red through the water in Hogan's swimming pool.

ALWAYS A NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL EVERY ISSUE

I WANT A LAWYER

For me, there were a few things
between prison and freedom.
Like a stolen car, a three-time
loser—and bullets in the night...

by WILLIAM JEFFREY

I HAD BEEN in the suburban neighborhood for about an hour, walking in the general direction of the city, when I finally found what I was looking for.

It was a pretty area, full of those cement-and-glass apartment complexes and a lot of shade trees and rolling lawns. Nothing much was moving, except for an occasional housewife or barking dog; the kids were still in school.

But the sun was burning down from a cloudless mid-afternoon sky, melting the



blacktop streets and shimmering off the concrete walks, and my feet felt as if they were broiling. I had a headache, too—I'd forgotten my hat—and I was beginning to think the whole area was a bust.

I started through the parking lot of a block-square apartment house, which was behind one of those sprawling shopping centers. I had about come to the end of the last row of cars, and was thinking of heading down to the supermarket to see what I could find there, when I saw this year-old Dodge compact.

It was a nice, modest blue with no gaudy chrome or fancy wheel covers or whitewalls. A family's second car, I figured, that would blend right in with the traffic until you'd hardly notice it. It was what I wanted—and somebody had been nice enough to leave the keys in the ignition.

I looked around the lot, and it was deserted as far as I could see. So I opened the door and slipped in under the wheel, started her up, and drove out of there nice as you please. I rolled the window down, because it was damned hot in the car, and drove out of the development and over to the Expressway.

I went a mile along there, driving leisurely, enjoying the cool rush of air after the amount of hot walking I had done. At Stevenson Park Boulevard, I turned off and headed toward my area of the city. I was feeling pretty good about the whole thing.

Until I looked up into the rear-view mirror and saw the black-and-white police cruiser coming up behind me with a siren and red light.

I groaned softly to myself, my hands tightening on the wheel. Of all the damned luck! I thought briefly about trying to outrun them, but that would have been a foolish move. So I slowed down and pulled over to

the shoulder. It was me they were after, all right, and not some other objective. The cruiser cut across in front, and two uniformed cops jumped out with drawn service revolvers.

I kept my hands on the wheel and sat still, sweating and thinking what the hell? One of the cops pulled open the driver's door and dragged me out and told me to lean forward with my hands on the car's roof, my feet spread back. I did that without argument; there was no way I was going to get out of this one, and provoking trouble would only make things that much worse.

The cop ran a quick frisk and didn't find any weapons. Then he backed away and told me to turn around, and I obeyed carefully.

He said, "You want to tell us about it, mister?"

"There's not much to tell," I answered. "I swiped the car, that's all."

"Why?"

"Hell, I don't know. It was sitting there in the lot with the keys in it, and the next thing I knew I was inside and driving away with it."

"Sure," the cop said. He'd heard that story before.

"How'd you get onto me so quick; anyway? I haven't had the car more than ten minutes."

"You picked a bad time to heist it," the second cop said. "Woman who owns it was coming out of her apartment building when she saw you drive away. She called the station, and the dispatcher put the license number and description out to all units. We happened to be in this neighborhood, heading for the Expressway, when we saw you come down the exit ramp here on Stevenson."

The first cop asked, "What's your name?"

"You've got my wallet there."

"Tell me anyway."

"Carlisle. Russ Carlisle."

"What do you do for a living, Carlisle?"

"I'm—between jobs right now."

"Sure you are. You ever been arrested before?"

There was no point in lying; they'd find it out anyway.

"Yeah," I said. "A couple of times."

"What for?"

"Armed robbery once. Car theft once."

"Convictions?"

"No. Insufficient evidence."

"Not this time," the other cop said.

They took me down to police headquarters in the black-and-white. It was located in a wing of the City Hall—one

of those contemporary, single-story buildings made of rough stone and wood, surrounded by blacktop and grass, that looks more like a grammar school than a local government building.

The squadroom had air-conditioning, pastel-colored metal furniture, and a neat appearance, but that was as far as the new, public relations image went. The smell was still the same; there was nothing they could have done to change that.

The only cop in the room was a plainclothes detective, a thick-chested, square-jawed, bull-necked man who looked as if he did plenty of working out in a gym. He sat quietly at his desk and listened to the two in harness explain who I was and what I'd done. He watched me the whole time with that kind of shrewd impassiveness some cops have. One of the uniforms called him Webber.

When they were done talking, Webber leaned across to where I had been told to sit in front of the desk. "Suppose you tell me why you stole this car, Carlisle."

"I want a lawyer," I said politely.

"You'll get a lawyer, don't worry."

"No lawyer, no questions. That's the law, sir."

"So who's asking ques-

tions?" Webber said softly, and smiled. "I want to know why you stole that car."

"Well, it's a pretty hot day," I said. I kept my voice mild, without sarcasm. "I felt like going for a ride to cool off, and being as I don't have a car of my own—"

"Where were you going on this ride?"

I shrugged. "No place in particular."

"I suppose you were going to take the car back when you were done with it?"

"Yes, sir, I certainly was."

"Your driver's license says you're thirty-four, Carlisle, and you admitted to the arresting officers that you've got a record. You're too old and too wise to act the wide-eyed innocent, so suppose we stop playing games. You were going to sell the car, weren't you? Or strip it and sell the various parts."

"No, sir," I said. "I told you, I only wanted to use it for awhile." I looked at him steadily across his desk. "I'd like to have a lawyer present before I say anything else. I'm entitled to counsel, by law."

Webber sighed heavily and settled back in his chair. In a flat monotone he recited my civil rights, which meant I was officially going to be charged.

"You understand all of that,



Carlisle?" he asked when he was finished.

"Yes, sir. Do I get to make my call now?"

"You know a lawyer, or do you want us to get you one?"

"I know one," I said.

Webber picked up his phone, waited, and then said, "Jan-kowicz, give me an outside line. Yeah, one call only. No, route it through McHugh's desk."

The phone on a desk at the other side of the squadroom rang. Webber motioned to it.

"Use that one," he said. He had lost interest in me by this time:

I walked over there, picked the receiver up, and listened until I could hear the dial tone. Then I turned my back to Webber and dialled a number. The line buzzed a couple of times, and a heavy voice said, "Yeah?"

"This is Russ, Tony," I said softly. "I got picked up taking the car. I'm in the can now on auto theft charges."

"Of all the damned times—"

"Shut up and listen," I said. "The cops here think I'm calling a lawyer—a privileged call, so nobody's listening in—and I don't have much time. Pick up another car somewhere. Charley can do the driving tonight."

"You mean go through with it?"

"The two of you can handle it. It's late afternoon now and by the time they get through booking me, it'll be too late to post bond until tomorrow—and the job has to be done tonight. I found out the route the truck will be using just before I went after the car—North Maxfield, eleven o'clock—and things won't be the same for many months."

"All right, then. We don't have much choice."

"I'll meet you at the usual place tomorrow night, and we'll deliver to my contact in Mount Royal," I told him. "Now as soon as you hang up, call Davis and have him get down here; like I said, I'm supposed to be calling a lawyer."

I put the handset down, grinning mentally. The worst I could get for the car theft, I knew, would be a few months on the county farm and then probation. And I would have a five-year stake waiting for me when I got out. I would be taking none of the real risks. My alibi was absolutely unshakeable; and best of all, I had pulled off the kind of coup every con in the country dreams about.

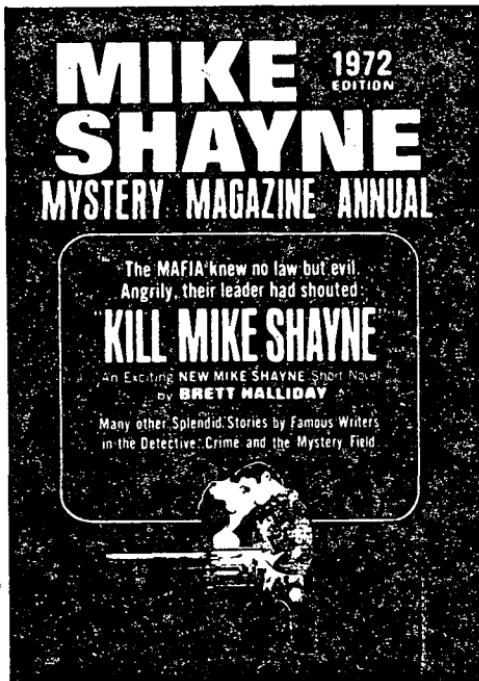
I mean, how many guys ever gave the go-ahead for a one hundred thousand dollar chin-chilla fur heist from a police station squadroom?

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MARCH—1973



by HERBERT HARRIS

No one knew about a little dead girl. No-one but he—and a thing out of the sky...

MUCH THE worst part was waiting for the police to come. Killing the girl hadn't been so awful as he had thought. It was the waiting, working out the possible questions and answers in his mind.

A murderer had to be calm and unemotional, and, Tony

Killer In The Rain

Carson, who was neurotic, had always known he would never make a really good killer.

He would have to try and stop shaking and twitching when they questioned him. He would have to be as cool as possible. No stammering or sweating.

It had been a shock to find he was out of his tablets. The drug would have helped to keep him steady. Being without the drug scared him. The little tablets had become like friends and he felt a terrible emptiness without them.

He tried hard not to think of the French girl he had left in the ditch, but every so often his mind's eye strayed to the limp body lying sprawled on the back seat of the Daimler, the livid marks of his fingers on her throat, her dark eyes fixed in an eternal stare.

Half the night had been taken up drying the car. This was the most important thing of all. Everything depended on it.

He had spread old newspapers on the garage floor so that it shouldn't get wet when he drove the car in. After he had dried off all the underpart of the car with a portable heater, and even brushed every inch of the tires dry, he took up the newspapers and burned them in a boiler. Then,

painstakingly, he removed every trace of wet from the rest of the car.

Nobody could possibly tell now that the car had been out in the rain. And when the French girl had gasped out her last under the pressure of his fingers, the rain had been beating on the car roof in a sudden sharp shower.

Carson had secretly damned and blasted that rain, because he had not wanted anyone to know the car had been taken out of the garage. Any evidence of rain—on the car itself or under it—would give the whole game away.

That was why he felt a tremendous relief when his night's labors were over, yet he was still shaking horribly from a delayed tension and praying he could stop it.

The police were certain to come and talk to him. People who knew Monique would be bound to mention his name as one of her more intimate friends.

And then Monique's friends would say that Carson, her chauffeur friend, got ragingly jealous if she so much as looked at another fellow. Suppose, therefore, that she told him—as she had done—that she was pregnant by another man.

On top of that he was pretty sure that the Daimler had been



spotted near where he had dumped the girl. In which case, if the make of the car had been noticed and the word passed on to the police...

Oh yes, his alibi had to be good—really good.

The old girl's Daimler was supposed to be "out of action". This was so that she would swear blind he couldn't have taken it out of the garage. A little gimmick to pull wool over their eyes.

On the afternoon of the day when he had done the French girl in, he had deliberately immobilised the Daimler.

"Sorry, ma'am, can't get her

to start," he had told Mrs. Turleigh.

His employer—an understanding old trout, he always thought—said: "Well, never mind, Carson. I can do without the car till the weekend. You can't work on it all day tomorrow if you like."

But later he had put the car right again, and had gone off after dark to pick up Monique. She had thought he was just wanting to "talk things over."

Detective-Inspector Lawford studied his notes for a few moments, then looked at the much younger Detective-Sergeant Dodds.

"The fingers all point in the same direction, don't they?" he remarked.

"You mean the chauffeur sir?"

"Yes. Tony Carson. He was her lover... pretty possessive too, I understand. And she was expecting another chap's kid. At about the time she was strangled, a truck-driver saw a Daimler come out of the lane where her body was found. He noticed it because there weren't many cars about, being a foul night."

"And Carson drives a Daimler as a chauffeur. It fits, sir."

"Not yet, Dodds. We have to

prove he had that Daimler out last night. What's the name of that woman he works for?"

"Mrs. Turleigh, sir."

"Come on, Dodds, let's go there," the inspector said.

Mrs. Turleigh was an elderly grey-haired woman, slightly hard of hearing. Though the morning was now advanced, she still wore a dressing-gown.

"I trust we haven't disturbed your breakfast, ma'am?" the inspector asked politely.

She shook her head and he introduced himself. "We're making enquiries in connection with the murder of a young woman at Climperton. A Daimler was seen near the spot at the time."

The woman looked puzzled. "A lot of people own Daimlers, surely?"

"Quite. This is merely routine, you know. Was your car in use last night?"

"It couldn't have been—it was out of action."

A frown of annoyance crossed Lawford's face. There were too many blank walls in police work, he thought.

"My chauffeur's trying to repair it now," she added.

"Did you see your chauffeur last evening?"

"No, he took the evening off, Inspector."

"He couldn't have got the car working last evening and

gone out in it without your knowing?"

Mrs. Turleigh pondered. "It's possible, I suppose. I have the television on rather loud—I'm a bit deaf, you know. And the garage is on the other side of the house."

The inspector added cautiously. "The murdered girl was apparently a friend of your chauffeur, Tony Carson."

Mrs. Turleigh looked surprised. "Really? I was not aware he had any girl friends. I've been under the impression he was always rather a lone wolf."

"It will be necessary for us to have a talk with Mr. Carson—purely routine."

"Of course, Inspector. You'll find him in the garage. He's always playing with the Daimler. Cars are his toys."

And women? Lawford thought. He nodded his thanks and went with Dodds to the garage.

Carson was at work on the engine. His heart missed several beats as he saw the men approaching, although he had been expecting them. He braced himself.

"Ah, Mr. Carson. . ." Inspector Lawford was pleasantly impartial as he introduced himself to the chauffeur. "We're investigating the murder of a Miss Monique Leclerc, whose body was found early

this morning in a ditch at Climperton."

Carson put on his shocked face, hoping it looked genuine. "Monique? Dead? Oh my God. . . how awful."

"You knew her quite well, then?"

"Yes, I was among Monique's many friends. She was a very popular girl. We belonged to the same club."

"You met her at the club last night?"

"No."

"Somewhere else perhaps?"

Carson's uneasiness came flooding back. He steeled himself to control it. "No, I saw it was raining, so I stayed indoors."

Lawford looked hard at the car and the floor beneath it. "Yes, it did rain last night, didn't it?" He pursed his lips. "The car looks nice and clean."

"Thank you."

"Been out in it this week?"

"Yes, several times. But the rain we had last night was the first for a week, so the car never had a chance to get wet."

The inspector nodded and went on: "A witness noticed a Daimler near the scene of the crime, at just about the right time, so it occurred to us that you might have taken the Daimler out. Did you drive it last night?"

Tony Carson smiled politely,

shaking his head. "That would have been impossible, Inspector. It wasn't working, as Mrs. Turleigh will confirm. I'm trying to trace the trouble now."

"Ignition?"

"No. She started up all right yesterday, but wouldn't move when I put her in gear. I've not really had a good look yet."

"Mind if I play with it for a bit?" Lawford asked.

"Not at all." Carson felt the prickings of fear again—almost unbearable—but he knew that the Daimler wouldn't move until he had made that slight readjustment again, that tiny readjustment which had made it possible for him to go and pick up Monique.

The inspector slid behind the wheel. He turned the ignition, started up the motor. And then his eyes, like the eyes of Sergeant Dodds and the now frightened eyes of Carson, moved back and forth, working in unison with the widescreen wipers that laid bare the truth as they inscribed their terrible telltale rain-wet arcs across the glass.

Lawford's expression, as he looked at the chauffeur, was half-accusing, half-enquiring.

And suddenly, as the strain became too much, Carson began to sob. Hadn't he known he would never make a killer?

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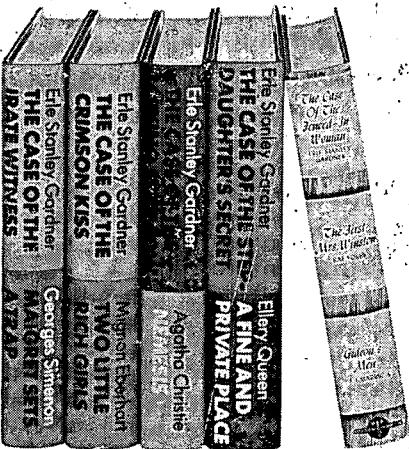
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